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THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO

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CHAPTER 1

How it happened that Mastro Cherry, carpenter, found a piece of wood that wept and laughed like a child.

Centuries ago there lived--

"A king!" my little readers will say immediately.

No, children, you are mistaken. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood. It was not an expensive piece of wood. Far from it. Just a common block of firewood, one of those thick, solid logs that are put on the fire in winter to make cold rooms cozy and warm.

I do not know how this really happened, yet the fact remains that one fine day this piece of wood found itself in the shop of an old carpenter. His real name was Mastro Antonio, but everyone called him Mastro Cherry, for the tip of his nose was so round and red and shiny that it looked like a ripe cherry.

As soon as he saw that piece of wood, Mastro Cherry was filled with joy. Rubbing his hands together happily, he mumbled half to himself:

"This has come in the nick of time. I shall use it to make the leg of a table."

He grasped the hatchet quickly to peel off the bark and shape the wood. But as he was about to give it the first blow, he stood still with arm uplifted, for he had heard a wee, little voice say in a beseeching tone: "Please be careful! Do not hit me so hard!"

What a look of surprise shone on Mastro Cherry's face! His funny face became still funnier.

He turned frightened eyes about the room to find out where that wee, little voice had come from and he saw no one! He looked under the bench--no one! He peeped inside the closet--no one! He searched among the shavings--no one! He opened the door to look up and down the street--and still no one!

"Oh, I see!" he then said, laughing and scratching his Wig. "It can easily be seen that I only thought I heard the tiny voice say the words! Well, well--to work once more."

He struck a most solemn blow upon the piece of wood.

"Oh, oh! You hurt!" cried the same far-away little voice.

Mastro Cherry grew dumb, his eyes popped out of his head, his mouth opened wide, and his tongue hung down on his chin.

As soon as he regained the use of his senses, he said, trembling and stuttering from fright:

"Where did that voice come from, when there is no one around? Might it be that this piece of wood has learned to weep and cry like a child? I can hardly believe it. Here it is--a piece of common firewood, good only to burn in the stove, the same as any other. Yet--might someone be hidden in it? If so, the worse for him. I'll fix him!"

With these words, he grabbed the log with both hands and started to knock it about unmercifully. He threw it to the floor, against the walls of the room, and even up to the ceiling.

He listened for the tiny voice to moan and cry. He waited two minutes--nothing; five minutes--nothing; ten minutes--nothing.

"Oh, I see," he said, trying bravely to laugh and ruffling up his wig with his hand. "It can easily be seen I only imagined I heard the tiny voice! Well, well--to work once more!"

The poor fellow was scared half to death, so he tried to sing a gay song in order to gain courage.

He set aside the hatchet and picked up the plane to make the wood smooth and even, but as he drew it to and fro, he heard the same tiny voice. This time it giggled as it spoke:

"Stop it! Oh, stop it! Ha, ha, ha! You tickle my stomach."

This time poor Mastro Cherry fell as if shot. When he opened his eyes, he found himself sitting on the floor.

His face had changed; fright had turned even the tip of his nose from red to deepest purple.

CHAPTER 2

Mastro Cherry gives the piece of wood to his friend Geppetto, who takes it to make himself a Marionette that will dance, fence, and turn somersaults.

In that very instant, a loud knock sounded on the door. "Come in," said the carpenter, not having an atom of strength left with which to stand up.

At the words, the door opened and a dapper little old man came in. His name was Geppetto, but to the boys of the neighborhood he was Polendina,* on account of the wig he always wore which was just the color of yellow corn.

* Cornmeal mush

Geppetto had a very bad temper. Woe to the one who called him Polendina! He became as wild as a beast and no one could soothe him.

"Good day, Mastro Antonio," said Geppetto. "What are you doing on the floor?"

"I am teaching the ants their A B C's."

"Good luck to you!"

"What brought you here, friend Geppetto?"

"My legs. And it may flatter you to know, Mastro Antonio, that I have come to you to beg for a favor."

"Here I am, at your service," answered the carpenter, raising himself on to his knees.

"This morning a fine idea came to me."

"Let's hear it."

"I thought of making myself a beautiful wooden Marionette. It must be wonderful, one that will be able to dance, fence, and turn somersaults. With it I intend to go around the world, to earn my crust of bread and cup of wine. What do you think of it?"

"Bravo, Polendina!" cried the same tiny voice which came from no one knew where.

On hearing himself called Polendina, Mastro Geppetto turned the color of a red pepper and, facing the carpenter, said to him angrily:

"Why do you insult me?"

"Who is insulting you?"

"You called me Polendina."

"I did not."

"I suppose you think I did! Yet I KNOW it was you."

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

And growing angrier each moment, they went from words to blows, and finally began to scratch and bite and slap each other.

When the fight was over, Mastro Antonio had Geppetto's yellow wig in his hands and Geppetto found the carpenter's curly wig in his mouth.

"Give me back my wig!" shouted Mastro Antonio in a surly voice.

"You return mine and we'll be friends."

The two little old men, each with his own wig back on his own head, shook hands and swore to be good friends for the rest of their lives.

"Well then, Mastro Geppetto," said the carpenter, to show he bore him no ill will, "what is it you want?"

"I want a piece of wood to make a Marionette. Will you give it to me?"

Mastro Antonio, very glad indeed, went immediately to his bench to get the piece of wood which had frightened him so much. But as he was about to give it to his friend, with a violent jerk it slipped out of his hands and hit against poor Geppetto's thin legs.

"Ah! Is this the gentle way, Mastro Antonio, in which you make your gifts? You have made me almost lame!"

"I swear to you I did not do it!"

"It was I, of course!"

"It's the fault of this piece of wood."

"You're right; but remember you were the one to throw it at my legs."

"I did not throw it!"

"Liar!"

"Geppetto, do not insult me or I shall call you Polendina."

"Idiot."

"Polendina!"

"Donkey!"

"Polendina!"

"Ugly monkey!"

"Polendina!"

On hearing himself called Polendina for the third time, Geppetto lost his head with rage and threw himself upon the carpenter. Then and there they gave each other a sound thrashing.

After this fight, Mastro Antonio had two more scratches on his nose, and Geppetto had two buttons missing from his coat. Thus having settled their accounts, they shook hands and swore to be good friends for the rest of their lives.

Then Geppetto took the fine piece of wood, thanked Mastro Antonio, and limped away toward home.

CHAPTER 3

As soon as he gets home, Geppetto fashions the Marionette and calls it

Pinocchio. The first pranks of the Marionette.

Little as Geppetto's house was, it was neat and comfortable. It was a small room on the ground floor, with a tiny window under the stairway. The furniture could not have been much simpler: a very old chair, a rickety old bed, and a tumble-down table. A fireplace full of burning logs was painted on the wall opposite the door. Over the fire, there was painted a pot full of something which kept boiling happily away and sending up clouds of what looked like real steam.

As soon as he reached home, Geppetto took his tools and began to cut and shape the wood into a Marionette.

"What shall I call him?" he said to himself. "I think I'll call him PINOCCHIO. This name will make his fortune. I knew a whole family of Pinocchi once--Pinocchio the father, Pinocchia the mother, and Pinocchi the children--and they were all lucky. The richest of them begged for his living."

After choosing the name for his Marionette, Geppetto set seriously to work to make the hair, the forehead, the eyes. Fancy his surprise when he noticed that these eyes moved and then stared fixedly at him. Geppetto, seeing this, felt insulted and said in a grieved tone:

"Ugly wooden eyes, why do you stare so?"

There was no answer.

After the eyes, Geppetto made the nose, which began to stretch as soon as finished. It stretched and stretched and stretched till it became so long, it seemed endless.

Poor Geppetto kept cutting it and cutting it, but the more he cut, the longer grew that impertinent nose. In despair he let it alone.

Next he made the mouth.

No sooner was it finished than it began to laugh and poke fun at him.

"Stop laughing!" said Geppetto angrily; but he might as well have spoken to the wall.

"Stop laughing, I say!" he roared in a voice of thunder.

The mouth stopped laughing, but it stuck out a long tongue.

Not wishing to start an argument, Geppetto made believe he saw nothing and went on with his work. After the mouth, he made the chin, then the neck, the shoulders, the stomach, the arms, and the hands.

As he was about to put the last touches on the finger tips, Geppetto felt his wig being pulled off. He glanced up and what did he see? His yellow wig was in the Marionette's hand. "Pinocchio, give me my wig!"

But instead of giving it back, Pinocchio put it on his own head, which was half swallowed up in it.

At that unexpected trick, Geppetto became very sad and downcast, more so than he had ever been before.

"Pinocchio, you wicked boy!" he cried out. "You are not yet finished, and you start out by being impudent to your poor old father. Very bad, my son, very bad!"

And he wiped away a tear.

The legs and feet still had to be made. As soon as they were done, Geppetto felt a sharp kick on the tip of his nose.

"I deserve it!" he said to himself. "I should have thought of this before I made him. Now it's too late!"

He took hold of the Marionette under the arms and put him on the floor to teach him to walk.

Pinocchio's legs were so stiff that he could not move them, and Geppetto held his hand and showed him how to put out one foot after the other.

When his legs were limbered up, Pinocchio started walking by himself and ran all around the room. He came to the open door, and with one leap he was out into the street. Away he flew!

Poor Geppetto ran after him but was unable to catch him, for Pinocchio ran in leaps and bounds, his two wooden feet, as they beat on the stones of the street, making as much noise as twenty peasants in wooden shoes.

"Catch him! Catch him!" Geppetto kept shouting. But the people in the street, seeing a wooden Marionette running like the wind, stood still to stare and to laugh until they cried.

At last, by sheer luck, a Carabineer* happened along, who, hearing all that noise, thought that it might be a runaway colt, and stood bravely in the middle of the street, with legs wide apart, firmly resolved to stop it and prevent any trouble.

* A military policeman

Pinocchio saw the Carabineer from afar and tried his best to escape between the legs of the big fellow, but without success.

The Carabineer grabbed him by the nose (it was an extremely long one and seemed made on purpose for that very thing) and returned him to Mastro Geppetto.

The little old man wanted to pull Pinocchio's ears. Think how he felt when, upon searching for them, he discovered that he had forgotten to make them!

All he could do was to seize Pinocchio by the back of the neck and take him home. As he was doing so, he shook him two or three times and said to him angrily:

"We're going home now. When we get home, then we'll settle this matter!"

Pinocchio, on hearing this, threw himself on the ground and refused to take another step. One person after another gathered around the two.

Some said one thing, some another.

"Poor Marionette," called out a man. "I am not surprised he doesn't want to go home. Geppetto, no doubt, will beat him unmercifully, he is so

mean and cruel!"

"Geppetto looks like a good man," added another, "but with boys he's a real tyrant. If we leave that poor Marionette in his hands he may tear him to pieces!"

They said so much that, finally, the Carabineer ended matters by setting Pinocchio at liberty and dragging Geppetto to prison. The poor old fellow did not know how to defend himself, but wept and wailed like a child and said between his sobs:

"Ungrateful boy! To think I tried so hard to make you a well-behaved Marionette! I deserve it, however! I should have given the matter more thought."

What happened after this is an almost unbelievable story, but you may read it, dear children, in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 4

The story of Pinocchio and the Talking Cricket, in which one sees that bad children do not like to be corrected by those who know more than they do.

Very little time did it take to get poor old Geppetto to prison. In the meantime that rascal, Pinocchio, free now from the clutches of the Carabineer, was running wildly across fields and meadows, taking one short cut after another toward home. In his wild flight, he leaped over brambles and bushes, and across brooks and ponds, as if he were a goat or a hare chased by hounds.

On reaching home, he found the house door half open. He slipped into the room, locked the door, and threw himself on the floor, happy at his escape.

But his happiness lasted only a short time, for just then he heard someone saying:

"Cri-cri-cri!"

"Who is calling me?" asked Pinocchio, greatly frightened.

"I am!"

Pinocchio turned and saw a large cricket crawling slowly up the wall.

"Tell me, Cricket, who are you?"

"I am the Talking Cricket and I have been living in this room for more than one hundred years."

"Today, however, this room is mine," said the Marionette, "and if you wish to do me a favor, get out now, and don't turn around even once."

"I refuse to leave this spot," answered the Cricket, "until I have told you a great truth."

"Tell it, then, and hurry."

"Woe to boys who refuse to obey their parents and run away from home! They will never be happy in this world, and when they are older they will be very sorry for it."

"Sing on, Cricket mine, as you please. What I know is, that tomorrow, at dawn, I leave this place forever. If I stay here the same thing will happen to me which happens to all other boys and girls. They are sent to school, and whether they want to or not, they must study. As for me, let me tell you, I hate to study! It's much more fun, I think, to chase after butterflies, climb trees, and steal birds' nests."

"Poor little silly! Don't you know that if you go on like that, you will grow into a perfect donkey and that you'll be the laughingstock of everyone?"

"Keep still, you ugly Cricket!" cried Pinocchio.

But the Cricket, who was a wise old philosopher, instead of being offended at Pinocchio's impudence, continued in the same tone:

"If you do not like going to school, why don't you at least learn a trade, so that you can earn an honest living?"

"Shall I tell you something?" asked Pinocchio, who was beginning to lose patience. "Of all the trades in the world, there is only one that really suits me."

"And what can that be?"

"That of eating, drinking, sleeping, playing, and wandering around from morning till night."

"Let me tell you, for your own good, Pinocchio," said the Talking Cricket in his calm voice, "that those who follow that trade always end up in the hospital or in prison."

"Careful, ugly Cricket! If you make me angry, you'll be sorry!"

"Poor Pinocchio, I am sorry for you."

"Why?"

"Because you are a Marionette and, what is much worse, you have a wooden head."

At these last words, Pinocchio jumped up in a fury, took a hammer from the bench, and threw it with all his strength at the Talking Cricket.

Perhaps he did not think he would strike it. But, sad to relate, my dear children, he did hit the Cricket, straight on its head.

With a last weak "cri-cri-cri" the poor Cricket fell from the wall, dead!

CHAPTER 5

Pinocchio is hungry and looks for an egg to cook himself an omelet; but, to his surprise, the omelet flies out of the window.

If the Cricket's death scared Pinocchio at all, it was only for a very few moments. For, as night came on, a queer, empty feeling at the pit of his stomach reminded the Marionette that he had eaten nothing as yet.

A boy's appetite grows very fast, and in a few moments the queer, empty feeling had become hunger, and the hunger grew bigger and bigger, until soon he was as ravenous as a bear.

Poor Pinocchio ran to the fireplace where the pot was boiling and stretched out his hand to take the cover off, but to his amazement the pot was only painted! Think how he felt! His long nose became at least two inches longer.

He ran about the room, dug in all the boxes and drawers, and even looked under the bed in search of a piece of bread, hard though it might be, or a cookie, or perhaps a bit of fish. A bone left by a dog would have tasted good to him! But he found nothing.

And meanwhile his hunger grew and grew. The only relief poor Pinocchio had was to yawn; and he certainly did yawn, such a big yawn that his mouth stretched out to the tips of his ears. Soon he became dizzy and faint. He wept and wailed to himself: "The Talking Cricket was right. It was wrong of me to disobey Father and to run away from home. If he were here now, I wouldn't be so hungry! Oh, how horrible it is to be hungry!"

Suddenly, he saw, among the sweepings in a corner, something round and white that looked very much like a hen's egg. In a jiffy he pounced upon it. It was an egg.

The Marionette's joy knew no bounds. It is impossible to describe it, you must picture it to yourself. Certain that he was dreaming, he turned the egg over and over in his hands, fondled it, kissed it, and talked to it:

"And now, how shall I cook you? Shall I make an omelet? No, it is better to fry you in a pan! Or shall I drink you? No, the best way is to fry you in the pan. You will taste better."

No sooner said than done. He placed a little pan over a foot warmer full of hot coals. In the pan, instead of oil or butter, he poured a little water. As soon as the water started to boil--tac!--he broke the eggshell. But in place of the white and the yolk of the egg, a little yellow Chick, fluffy and gay and smiling, escaped from it. Bowing politely to Pinocchio, he said to him:

"Many, many thanks, indeed, Mr. Pinocchio, for having saved me the trouble of breaking my shell! Good-bye and good luck to you and remember me to the family!"

With these words he spread out his wings and, darting to the open window, he flew away into space till he was out of sight.

The poor Marionette stood as if turned to stone, with wide eyes, open mouth, and the empty halves of the egg-shell in his hands. When he came to himself, he began to cry and shriek at the top of his lungs, stamping his feet on the ground and wailing all the while:

"The Talking Cricket was right! If I had not run away from home and if Father were here now, I should not be dying of hunger. Oh, how horrible

it is to be hungry!"

And as his stomach kept grumbling more than ever and he had nothing to quiet it with, he thought of going out for a walk to the near-by village, in the hope of finding some charitable person who might give him a bit of bread.

CHAPTER 6

Pinocchio falls asleep with his feet on a foot warmer, and awakens the next day with his feet all burned off.

Pinocchio hated the dark street, but he was so hungry that, in spite of it, he ran out of the house. The night was pitch black. It thundered, and bright flashes of lightning now and again shot across the sky, turning it into a sea of fire. An angry wind blew cold and raised dense clouds of dust, while the trees shook and moaned in a weird way.

Pinocchio was greatly afraid of thunder and lightning, but the hunger he felt was far greater than his fear. In a dozen leaps and bounds, he came to the village, tired out, puffing like a whale, and with tongue hanging.

The whole village was dark and deserted. The stores were closed, the doors, the windows. In the streets, not even a dog could be seen. It seemed the Village of the Dead.

Pinocchio, in desperation, ran up to a doorway, threw himself upon the bell, and pulled it wildly, saying to himself: "Someone will surely answer that!"

He was right. An old man in a nightcap opened the window and looked out. He called down angrily:

"What do you want at this hour of night?"

"Will you be good enough to give me a bit of bread? I am hungry."

"Wait a minute and I'll come right back," answered the old fellow, thinking he had to deal with one of those boys who love to roam around at night ringing people's bells while they are peacefully asleep.

After a minute or two, the same voice cried:

"Get under the window and hold out your hat!"

Pinocchio had no hat, but he managed to get under the window just in time to feel a shower of ice-cold water pour down on his poor wooden head, his shoulders, and over his whole body.

He returned home as wet as a rag, and tired out from weariness and hunger.

As he no longer had any strength left with which to stand, he sat down on a little stool and put his two feet on the stove to dry them.

There he fell asleep, and while he slept, his wooden feet began to burn. Slowly, very slowly, they blackened and turned to ashes.

Pinocchio snored away happily as if his feet were not his own. At dawn he opened his eyes just as a loud knocking sounded at the door.

"Who is it?" he called, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"It is I," answered a voice.

It was the voice of Geppetto.

CHAPTER 7

Geppetto returns home and gives his own breakfast to the Marionette

The poor Marionette, who was still half asleep, had not yet found out that his two feet were burned and gone. As soon as he heard his Father's voice, he jumped up from his seat to open the door, but, as he did so, he staggered and fell headlong to the floor.

In falling, he made as much noise as a sack of wood falling from the fifth story of a house.

"Open the door for me!" Geppetto shouted from the street.

"Father, dear Father, I can't," answered the Marionette in despair, crying and rolling on the floor.

"Why can't you?"

"Because someone has eaten my feet."

"And who has eaten them?"

"The cat," answered Pinocchio, seeing that little animal busily playing with some shavings in the corner of the room.

"Open! I say," repeated Geppetto, "or I'll give you a sound whipping when I get in."

"Father, believe me, I can't stand up. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall have to walk on my knees all my life."

Geppetto, thinking that all these tears and cries were only other pranks of the Marionette, climbed up the side of the house and went in through the window.

At first he was very angry, but on seeing Pinocchio stretched out on the floor and really without feet, he felt very sad and sorrowful. Picking him up from the floor, he fondled and caressed him, talking to him while the tears ran down his cheeks:

"My little Pinocchio, my dear little Pinocchio! How did you burn your feet?"

"I don't know, Father, but believe me, the night has been a terrible one and I shall remember it as long as I live. The thunder was so noisy and the lightning so bright--and I was hungry. And then the Talking Cricket said to me, 'You deserve it; you were bad;' and I said to him, 'Careful,

Cricket;' and he said to me, 'You are a Marionette and you have a wooden head;' and I threw the hammer at him and killed him. It was his own fault, for I didn't want to kill him. And I put the pan on the coals, but the Chick flew away and said, 'I'll see you again! Remember me to the family.' And my hunger grew, and I went out, and the old man with a nightcap looked out of the window and threw water on me, and I came home and put my feet on the stove to dry them because I was still hungry, and I fell asleep and now my feet are gone but my hunger isn't! Oh!--Oh!--Oh!" And poor Pinocchio began to scream and cry so loudly that he could be heard for miles around.

Geppetto, who had understood nothing of all that jumbled talk, except that the Marionette was hungry, felt sorry for him, and pulling three pears out of his pocket, offered them to him, saying:

"These three pears were for my breakfast, but I give them to you gladly. Eat them and stop weeping."

"If you want me to eat them, please peel them for me."

"Peel them?" asked Geppetto, very much surprised. "I should never have thought, dear boy of mine, that you were so dainty and fussy about your food. Bad, very bad! In this world, even as children, we must accustom ourselves to eat of everything, for we never know what life may hold in store for us!"

"You may be right," answered Pinocchio, "but I will not eat the pears if they are not peeled. I don't like them."

And good old Geppetto took out a knife, peeled the three pears, and put the skins in a row on the table.

Pinocchio ate one pear in a twinkling and started to throw the core away, but Geppetto held his arm.

"Oh, no, don't throw it away! Everything in this world may be of some use!"

"But the core I will not eat!" cried Pinocchio in an angry tone.

"Who knows?" repeated Geppetto calmly.

And later the three cores were placed on the table next to the skins.

Pinocchio had eaten the three pears, or rather devoured them. Then he yawned deeply, and wailed:

"I'm still hungry."

"But I have no more to give you."

"Really, nothing--nothing?"

"I have only these three cores and these skins."

"Very well, then," said Pinocchio, "if there is nothing else I'll eat them."

At first he made a wry face, but, one after another, the skins and the cores disappeared.

"Ah! Now I feel fine!" he said after eating the last one.

"You see," observed Geppetto, "that I was right when I told you that one must not be too fussy and too dainty about food. My dear, we never know what life may have in store for us!"

CHAPTER 8

Geppetto makes Pinocchio a new pair of feet, and sells his coat to buy him an A-B-C book.

The Marionette, as soon as his hunger was appeased, started to grumble and cry that he wanted a new pair of feet.

But Mastro Geppetto, in order to punish him for his mischief, let him alone the whole morning. After dinner he said to him:

"Why should I make your feet over again? To see you run away from home once more?"

"I promise you," answered the Marionette, sobbing, "that from now on I'll be good--"

"Boys always promise that when they want something," said Geppetto.

"I promise to go to school every day, to study, and to succeed--"

"Boys always sing that song when they want their own will."

"But I am not like other boys! I am better than all of them and I always tell the truth. I promise you, Father, that I'll learn a trade, and I'll be the comfort and staff of your old age."

Geppetto, though trying to look very stern, felt his eyes fill with tears and his heart soften when he saw Pinocchio so unhappy. He said no more, but taking his tools and two pieces of wood, he set to work diligently.

In less than an hour the feet were finished, two slender, nimble little feet, strong and quick, modeled as if by an artist's hands.

"Close your eyes and sleep!" Geppetto then said to the Marionette.

Pinocchio closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep, while Geppetto stuck on the two feet with a bit of glue melted in an eggshell, doing his work so well that the joint could hardly be seen.

As soon as the Marionette felt his new feet, he gave one leap from the table and started to skip and jump around, as if he had lost his head from very joy.

"To show you how grateful I am to you, Father, I'll go to school now. But to go to school I need a suit of clothes."

Geppetto did not have a penny in his pocket, so he made his son a little suit of flowered paper, a pair of shoes from the bark of a tree, and a tiny cap from a bit of dough.

Pinocchio ran to look at himself in a bowl of water, and he felt so happy that he said proudly:

"Now I look like a gentleman."

"Truly," answered Geppetto. "But remember that fine clothes do not make the man unless they be neat and clean."

"Very true," answered Pinocchio, "but, in order to go to school, I still need something very important."

"What is it?"

"An A-B-C book."

"To be sure! But how shall we get it?"

"That's easy. We'll go to a bookstore and buy it."

"And the money?"

"I have none."

"Neither have I," said the old man sadly.

Pinocchio, although a happy boy always, became sad and downcast at these words. When poverty shows itself, even mischievous boys understand what it means.

"What does it matter, after all?" cried Geppetto all at once, as he jumped up from his chair. Putting on his old coat, full of darns and patches, he ran out of the house without another word.

After a while he returned. In his hands he had the A-B-C book for his son, but the old coat was gone. The poor fellow was in his shirt sleeves and the day was cold.

"Where's your coat, Father?"

"I have sold it."

"Why did you sell your coat?"

"It was too warm."

Pinocchio understood the answer in a twinkling, and, unable to restrain his tears, he jumped on his father's neck and kissed him over and over.

CHAPTER 9

Pinocchio sells his A-B-C book to pay his way into the Marionette Theater.

See Pinocchio hurrying off to school with his new A-B-C book under his arm! As he walked along, his brain was busy planning hundreds of wonderful things, building hundreds of castles in the air. Talking to himself, he said:

"In school today, I'll learn to read, tomorrow to write, and the day after tomorrow I'll do arithmetic. Then, clever as I am, I can earn a lot of money. With the very first pennies I make, I'll buy Father a new cloth coat. Cloth, did I say? No, it shall be of gold and silver with diamond buttons. That poor man certainly deserves it; for, after all, isn't he in his shirt sleeves because he was good enough to buy a book for me? On this cold day, too! Fathers are indeed good to their children!"

As he talked to himself, he thought he heard sounds of pipes and drums coming from a distance: pi-pi-pi, pi-pi-pi. . .zum, zum, zum, zum.

He stopped to listen. Those sounds came from a little street that led to a small village along the shore.

"What can that noise be? What a nuisance that I have to go to school! Otherwise. . ."

There he stopped, very much puzzled. He felt he had to make up his mind for either one thing or another. Should he go to school, or should he follow the pipes?

"Today I'll follow the pipes, and tomorrow I'll go to school. There's always plenty of time to go to school," decided the little rascal at last, shrugging his shoulders.

No sooner said than done. He started down the street, going like the wind. On he ran, and louder grew the sounds of pipe and drum: pi-pi-pi, pi-pi-pi, pi-pi-pi . . .zum, zum, zum, zum.

Suddenly, he found himself in a large square, full of people standing in front of a little wooden building painted in brilliant colors.

"What is that house?" Pinocchio asked a little boy near him.

"Read the sign and you'll know."

"I'd like to read, but somehow I can't today."

"Oh, really? Then I'll read it to you. Know, then, that written in letters of fire I see the words: GREAT MARIONETTE THEATER."

"When did the show start?"

"It is starting now."

"And how much does one pay to get in?"

"Four pennies."

Pinocchio, who was wild with curiosity to know what was going on inside, lost all his pride and said to the boy shamelessly:

"Will you give me four pennies until tomorrow?"

"I'd give them to you gladly," answered the other, poking fun at him, "but just now I can't give them to you."

"For the price of four pennies, I'll sell you my coat."

"If it rains, what shall I do with a coat of flowered paper? I could not

take it off again."

"Do you want to buy my shoes?"

"They are only good enough to light a fire with."

"What about my hat?"

"Fine bargain, indeed! A cap of dough! The mice might come and eat it from my head!"

Pinocchio was almost in tears. He was just about to make one last offer, but he lacked the courage to do so. He hesitated, he wondered, he could not make up his mind. At last he said:

"Will you give me four pennies for the book?"

"I am a boy and I buy nothing from boys," said the little fellow with far more common sense than the Marionette.

"I'll give you four pennies for your A-B-C book," said a ragpicker who stood by.

Then and there, the book changed hands. And to think that poor old Geppetto sat at home in his shirt sleeves, shivering with cold, having sold his coat to buy that little book for his son!

CHAPTER 10

The Marionettes recognize their brother Pinocchio, and greet him with loud cheers; but the Director, Fire Eater, happens along and poor Pinocchio almost loses his life.

Quick as a flash, Pinocchio disappeared into the Marionette Theater. And then something happened which almost caused a riot.

The curtain was up and the performance had started.

Harlequin and Pulcinella were reciting on the stage and, as usual, they were threatening each other with sticks and blows.

The theater was full of people, enjoying the spectacle and laughing till they cried at the antics of the two Marionettes.

The play continued for a few minutes, and then suddenly, without any warning, Harlequin stopped talking. Turning toward the audience, he pointed to the rear of the orchestra, yelling wildly at the same time:

"Look, look! Am I asleep or awake? Or do I really see Pinocchio there?"

"Yes, yes! It is Pinocchio!" screamed Pulcinella.

"It is! It is!" shrieked Signora Rosaura, peeking in from the side of the stage.

"It is Pinocchio! It is Pinocchio!" yelled all the Marionettes, pouring out of the wings. "It is Pinocchio. It is our brother Pinocchio! Hurrah for Pinocchio!"

"Pinocchio, come up to me!" shouted Harlequin. "Come to the arms of your wooden brothers!"

At such a loving invitation, Pinocchio, with one leap from the back of the orchestra, found himself in the front rows. With another leap, he was on the orchestra leader's head. With a third, he landed on the stage.

It is impossible to describe the shrieks of joy, the warm embraces, the knocks, and the friendly greetings with which that strange company of dramatic actors and actresses received Pinocchio.

It was a heart-rending spectacle, but the audience, seeing that the play had stopped, became angry and began to yell:

"The play, the play, we want the play!"

The yelling was of no use, for the Marionettes, instead of going on with their act, made twice as much racket as before, and, lifting up Pinocchio on their shoulders, carried him around the stage in triumph.

At that very moment, the Director came out of his room. He had such a fearful appearance that one look at him would fill you with horror. His beard was as black as pitch, and so long that it reached from his chin down to his feet. His mouth was as wide as an oven, his teeth like yellow fangs, and his eyes, two glowing red coals. In his huge, hairy hands, a long whip, made of green snakes and black cats' tails twisted together, swished through the air in a dangerous way.

At the unexpected apparition, no one dared even to breathe. One could almost hear a fly go by. Those poor Marionettes, one and all, trembled like leaves in a storm.

"Why have you brought such excitement into my theater;" the huge fellow asked Pinocchio with the voice of an ogre suffering with a cold.

"Believe me, your Honor, the fault was not mine."

"Enough! Be quiet! I'll take care of you later."

As soon as the play was over, the Director went to the kitchen, where a fine big lamb was slowly turning on the spit. More wood was needed to finish cooking it. He called Harlequin and Pulcinella and said to them:

"Bring that Marionette to me! He looks as if he were made of well-seasoned wood. He'll make a fine fire for this spit."

Harlequin and Pulcinella hesitated a bit. Then, frightened by a look from their master, they left the kitchen to obey him. A few minutes later they returned, carrying poor Pinocchio, who was wriggling and squirming like an eel and crying pitifully:

"Father, save me! I don't want to die! I don't want to die!"

CHAPTER 11

Fire Eater sneezes and forgives Pinocchio, who saves his friend, Harlequin, from death.

In the theater, great excitement reigned.

Fire Eater (this was really his name) was very ugly, but he was far from being as bad as he looked. Proof of this is that, when he saw the poor Marionette being brought in to him, struggling with fear and crying, "I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" he felt sorry for him and began first to waver and then to weaken. Finally, he could control himself no longer and gave a loud sneeze.

At that sneeze, Harlequin, who until then had been as sad as a weeping willow, smiled happily and leaning toward the Marionette, whispered to him:

"Good news, brother mine! Fire Eater has sneezed and this is a sign that he feels sorry for you. You are saved!"

For be it known, that, while other people, when sad and sorrowful, weep and wipe their eyes, Fire Eater, on the other hand, had the strange habit of sneezing each time he felt unhappy. The way was just as good as any other to show the kindness of his heart.

After sneezing, Fire Eater, ugly as ever, cried to Pinocchio:

"Stop crying! Your wails give me a funny feeling down here in my stomach and--E--tchee!--E--tchee!" Two loud sneezes finished his speech.

"God bless you!" said Pinocchio.

"Thanks! Are your father and mother still living?" demanded Fire Eater.

"My father, yes. My mother I have never known."

"Your poor father would suffer terribly if I were to use you as firewood. Poor old man! I feel sorry for him! E--tchee! E--tchee! E--tchee!" Three more sneezes sounded, louder than ever.

"God bless you!" said Pinocchio.

"Thanks! However, I ought to be sorry for myself, too, just now. My good dinner is spoiled. I have no more wood for the fire, and the lamb is only half cooked. Never mind! In your place I'll burn some other Marionette. Hey there! Officers!"

At the call, two wooden officers appeared, long and thin as a yard of rope, with queer hats on their heads and swords in their hands.

Fire Eater yelled at them in a hoarse voice:

"Take Harlequin, tie him, and throw him on the fire. I want my lamb well done!"

Think how poor Harlequin felt! He was so scared that his legs doubled up under him and he fell to the floor.

Pinocchio, at that heartbreaking sight, threw himself at the feet of Fire Eater and, weeping bitterly, asked in a pitiful voice which could scarcely be heard:

"Have pity, I beg of you, signore!"

"There are no signori here!"

"Have pity, kind sir!"

"There are no sirs here!"

"Have pity, your Excellency!"

On hearing himself addressed as your Excellency, the Director of the Marionette Theater sat up very straight in his chair, stroked his long beard, and becoming suddenly kind and compassionate, smiled proudly as he said to Pinocchio:

"Well, what do you want from me now, Marionette?"

"I beg for mercy for my poor friend, Harlequin, who has never done the least harm in his life."

"There is no mercy here, Pinocchio. I have spared you. Harlequin must burn in your place. I am hungry and my dinner must be cooked."

"In that case," said Pinocchio proudly, as he stood up and flung away his cap of dough, "in that case, my duty is clear. Come, officers! Tie me up and throw me on those flames. No, it is not fair for poor Harlequin, the best friend that I have in the world, to die in my place!"

These brave words, said in a piercing voice, made all the other Marionettes cry. Even the officers, who were made of wood also, cried like two babies.

Fire Eater at first remained hard and cold as a piece of ice; but then, little by little, he softened and began to sneeze. And after four or five sneezes, he opened wide his arms and said to Pinocchio:

"You are a brave boy! Come to my arms and kiss me!"

Pinocchio ran to him and scurrying like a squirrel up the long black beard, he gave Fire Eater a loving kiss on the tip of his nose.

"Has pardon been granted to me?" asked poor Harlequin with a voice that was hardly a breath.

"Pardon is yours!" answered Fire Eater; and sighing and wagging his head, he added: "Well, tonight I shall have to eat my lamb only half cooked, but beware the next time, Marionettes."

At the news that pardon had been given, the Marionettes ran to the stage and, turning on all the lights, they danced and sang till dawn.

CHAPTER 12

Fire Eater gives Pinocchio five gold pieces for his father, Geppetto; but the Marionette meets a Fox and a Cat and follows them.

The next day Fire Eater called Pinocchio aside and asked him:

"What is your father's name?"

"Geppetto."

"And what is his trade?"

"He's a wood carver."

"Does he earn much?"

"He earns so much that he never has a penny in his pockets. Just think that, in order to buy me an A-B-C book for school, he had to sell the only coat he owned, a coat so full of darns and patches that it was a pity."

"Poor fellow! I feel sorry for him. Here, take these five gold pieces. Go, give them to him with my kindest regards."

Pinocchio, as may easily be imagined, thanked him a thousand times. He kissed each Marionette in turn, even the officers, and, beside himself with joy, set out on his homeward journey.

He had gone barely half a mile when he met a lame Fox and a blind Cat, walking together like two good friends. The lame Fox leaned on the Cat, and the blind Cat let the Fox lead him along.

"Good morning, Pinocchio," said the Fox, greeting him courteously.

"How do you know my name?" asked the Marionette.

"I know your father well."

"Where have you seen him?"

"I saw him yesterday standing at the door of his house."

"And what was he doing?"

"He was in his shirt sleeves trembling with cold."

"Poor Father! But, after today, God willing, he will suffer no longer."

"Why?"

"Because I have become a rich man."

"You, a rich man?" said the Fox, and he began to laugh out loud. The Cat was laughing also, but tried to hide it by stroking his long whiskers.

"There is nothing to laugh at," cried Pinocchio angrily. "I am very sorry to make your mouth water, but these, as you know, are five new gold pieces."

And he pulled out the gold pieces which Fire Eater had given him.

At the cheerful tinkle of the gold, the Fox unconsciously held out his paw that was supposed to be lame, and the Cat opened wide his two eyes till they looked like live coals, but he closed them again so quickly that Pinocchio did not notice.

"And may I ask," inquired the Fox, "what you are going to do with all

that money?"

"First of all," answered the Marionette, "I want to buy a fine new coat for my father, a coat of gold and silver with diamond buttons; after that, I'll buy an A-B-C book for myself."

"For yourself?"

"For myself. I want to go to school and study hard."

"Look at me," said the Fox. "For the silly reason of wanting to study, I have lost a paw."

"Look at me," said the Cat. "For the same foolish reason, I have lost the sight of both eyes."

At that moment, a Blackbird, perched on the fence along the road, called out sharp and clear:

"Pinocchio, do not listen to bad advice. If you do, you'll be sorry!"

Poor little Blackbird! If he had only kept his words to himself! In the twinkling of an eyelid, the Cat leaped on him, and ate him, feathers and all.

After eating the bird, he cleaned his whiskers, closed his eyes, and became blind once more.

"Poor Blackbird!" said Pinocchio to the Cat. "Why did you kill him?"

"I killed him to teach him a lesson. He talks too much. Next time he will keep his words to himself."

By this time the three companions had walked a long distance. Suddenly, the Fox stopped in his tracks and, turning to the Marionette, said to him:

"Do you want to double your gold pieces?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you want one hundred, a thousand, two thousand gold pieces for your miserable five?"

"Yes, but how?"

"The way is very easy. Instead of returning home, come with us."

"And where will you take me?"

"To the City of Simple Simons."

Pinocchio thought a while and then said firmly:

"No, I don't want to go. Home is near, and I'm going where Father is waiting for me. How unhappy he must be that I have not yet returned! I have been a bad son, and the Talking Cricket was right when he said that a disobedient boy cannot be happy in this world. I have learned this at my own expense. Even last night in the theater, when Fire Eater. . . Brrrr!!!! . . . The shivers run up and down my back at the mere thought of it."

"Well, then," said the Fox, "if you really want to go home, go ahead, but you'll be sorry."

"You'll be sorry," repeated the Cat.

"Think well, Pinocchio, you are turning your back on Dame Fortune."

"On Dame Fortune," repeated the Cat.

"Tomorrow your five gold pieces will be two thousand!"

"Two thousand!" repeated the Cat.

"But how can they possibly become so many?" asked Pinocchio wonderingly.

"I'll explain," said the Fox. "You must know that, just outside the City of Simple Simons, there is a blessed field called the Field of Wonders. In this field you dig a hole and in the hole you bury a gold piece. After covering up the hole with earth you water it well, sprinkle a bit of salt on it, and go to bed. During the night, the gold piece sprouts, grows, blossoms, and next morning you find a beautiful tree, that is loaded with gold pieces."

"So that if I were to bury my five gold pieces," cried Pinocchio with growing wonder, "next morning I should find--how many?"

"It is very simple to figure out," answered the Fox. "Why, you can figure it on your fingers! Granted that each piece gives you five hundred, multiply five hundred by five. Next morning you will find twenty-five hundred new, sparkling gold pieces."

"Fine! Fine!" cried Pinocchio, dancing about with joy. "And as soon as I have them, I shall keep two thousand for myself and the other five hundred I'll give to you two."

"A gift for us?" cried the Fox, pretending to be insulted. "Why, of course not!"

"Of course not!" repeated the Cat.

"We do not work for gain," answered the Fox. "We work only to enrich others."

"To enrich others!" repeated the Cat.

"What good people," thought Pinocchio to himself. And forgetting his father, the new coat, the A-B-C book, and all his good resolutions, he said to the Fox and to the Cat:

"Let us go. I am with you."

CHAPTER 13

The Inn of the Red Lobster

Cat and Fox and Marionette walked and walked and walked. At last, toward evening, dead tired, they came to the Inn of the Red Lobster.

"Let us stop here a while," said the Fox, "to eat a bite and rest for a few hours. At midnight we'll start out again, for at dawn tomorrow we must be at the Field of Wonders."

They went into the Inn and all three sat down at the same table. However, not one of them was very hungry.

The poor Cat felt very weak, and he was able to eat only thirty-five mullets with tomato sauce and four portions of tripe with cheese. Moreover, as he was so in need of strength, he had to have four more helpings of butter and cheese.

The Fox, after a great deal of coaxing, tried his best to eat a little. The doctor had put him on a diet, and he had to be satisfied with a small hare dressed with a dozen young and tender spring chickens. After the hare, he ordered some partridges, a few pheasants, a couple of rabbits, and a dozen frogs and lizards. That was all. He felt ill, he said, and could not eat another bite.

Pinocchio ate least of all. He asked for a bite of bread and a few nuts and then hardly touched them. The poor fellow, with his mind on the Field of Wonders, was suffering from a gold-piece indigestion.

Supper over, the Fox said to the Innkeeper:

"Give us two good rooms, one for Mr. Pinocchio and the other for me and my friend. Before starting out, we'll take a little nap. Remember to call us at midnight sharp, for we must continue on our journey."

"Yes, sir," answered the Innkeeper, winking in a knowing way at the Fox and the Cat, as if to say, "I understand."

As soon as Pinocchio was in bed, he fell fast asleep and began to dream. He dreamed he was in the middle of a field. The field was full of vines heavy with grapes. The grapes were no other than gold coins which tinkled merrily as they swayed in the wind. They seemed to say, "Let him who wants us take us!"

Just as Pinocchio stretched out his hand to take a handful of them, he was awakened by three loud knocks at the door. It was the Innkeeper who had come to tell him that midnight had struck.

"Are my friends ready?" the Marionette asked him.

"Indeed, yes! They went two hours ago."

"Why in such a hurry?"

"Unfortunately the Cat received a telegram which said that his first-born was suffering from chilblains and was on the point of death. He could not even wait to say good-by to you."

"Did they pay for the supper?"

"How could they do such a thing? Being people of great refinement, they did not want to offend you so deeply as not to allow you the honor of paying the bill."

"Too bad! That offense would have been more than pleasing to me," said Pinocchio, scratching his head.

"Where did my good friends say they would wait for me?" he added.

"At the Field of Wonders, at sunrise tomorrow morning."

Pinocchio paid a gold piece for the three suppers and started on his way toward the field that was to make him a rich man.

He walked on, not knowing where he was going, for it was dark, so dark that not a thing was visible. Round about him, not a leaf stirred. A few bats skimmed his nose now and again and scared him half to death. Once or twice he shouted, "Who goes there?" and the far-away hills echoed back to him, "Who goes there? Who goes there? Who goes. . . ?"

As he walked, Pinocchio noticed a tiny insect glimmering on the trunk of a tree, a small being that glowed with a pale, soft light.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am the ghost of the Talking Cricket," answered the little being in a faint voice that sounded as if it came from a far-away world.

"What do you want?" asked the Marionette.

"I want to give you a few words of good advice. Return home and give the four gold pieces you have left to your poor old father who is weeping because he has not seen you for many a day."

"Tomorrow my father will be a rich man, for these four gold pieces will become two thousand."

"Don't listen to those who promise you wealth overnight, my boy. As a rule they are either fools or swindlers! Listen to me and go home."

"But I want to go on!"

"The hour is late!"

"I want to go on."

"The night is very dark."

"I want to go on."

"The road is dangerous."

"I want to go on."

"Remember that boys who insist on having their own way, sooner or later come to grief."

"The same nonsense. Good-by, Cricket."

"Good night, Pinocchio, and may Heaven preserve you from the Assassins."

There was silence for a minute and the light of the Talking Cricket disappeared suddenly, just as if someone had snuffed it out. Once again the road was plunged in darkness.

CHAPTER 14

Pinocchio, not having listened to the good advice of the Talking Cricket, falls into the hands of the Assassins.

"Dear, oh, dear! When I come to think of it," said the Marionette to himself, as he once more set out on his journey, "we boys are really very unlucky. Everybody scolds us, everybody gives us advice, everybody warns us. If we were to allow it, everyone would try to be father and mother to us; everyone, even the Talking Cricket. Take me, for example. Just because I would not listen to that bothersome Cricket, who knows how many misfortunes may be awaiting me! Assassins indeed! At least I have never believed in them, nor ever will. To speak sensibly, I think assassins have been invented by fathers and mothers to frighten children who want to run away at night. And then, even if I were to meet them on the road, what matter? I'll just run up to them, and say, 'Well, signori, what do you want? Remember that you can't fool with me! Run along and mind your business.' At such a speech, I can almost see those poor fellows running like the wind. But in case they don't run away, I can always run myself. . ."

Pinocchio was not given time to argue any longer, for he thought he heard a slight rustle among the leaves behind him.

He turned to look and behold, there in the darkness stood two big black shadows, wrapped from head to foot in black sacks. The two figures leaped toward him as softly as if they were ghosts.

"Here they come!" Pinocchio said to himself, and, not knowing where to hide the gold pieces, he stuck all four of them under his tongue.

He tried to run away, but hardly had he taken a step, when he felt his arms grasped and heard two horrible, deep voices say to him: "Your money or your life!"

On account of the gold pieces in his mouth, Pinocchio could not say a word, so he tried with head and hands and body to show, as best he could, that he was only a poor Marionette without a penny in his pocket.

"Come, come, less nonsense, and out with your money!" cried the two thieves in threatening voices.

Once more, Pinocchio's head and hands said, "I haven't a penny."

"Out with that money or you're a dead man," said the taller of the two Assassins.

"Dead man," repeated the other.

"And after having killed you, we will kill your father also."

"Your father also!"

"No, no, no, not my Father!" cried Pinocchio, wild with terror; but as he screamed, the gold pieces tinkled together in his mouth.

"Ah, you rascal! So that's the game! You have the money hidden under your tongue. Out with it!"

But Pinocchio was as stubborn as ever.

"Are you deaf? Wait, young man, we'll get it from you in a twinkling!"

One of them grabbed the Marionette by the nose and the other by the chin, and they pulled him unmercifully from side to side in order to make him open his mouth.

All was of no use. The Marionette's lips might have been nailed together. They would not open.

In desperation the smaller of the two Assassins pulled out a long knife from his pocket, and tried to pry Pinocchio's mouth open with it.

Quick as a flash, the Marionette sank his teeth deep into the Assassin's hand, bit it off and spat it out. Fancy his surprise when he saw that it was not a hand, but a cat's paw.

Encouraged by this first victory, he freed himself from the claws of his assailers and, leaping over the bushes along the road, ran swiftly across the fields. His pursuers were after him at once, like two dogs chasing a hare.

After running seven miles or so, Pinocchio was well-nigh exhausted. Seeing himself lost, he climbed up a giant pine tree and sat there to see what he could see. The Assassins tried to climb also, but they slipped and fell.

Far from giving up the chase, this only spurred them on. They gathered a bundle of wood, piled it up at the foot of the pine, and set fire to it. In a twinkling the tree began to sputter and burn like a candle blown by the wind. Pinocchio saw the flames climb higher and higher. Not wishing to end his days as a roasted Marionette, he jumped quickly to the ground and off he went, the Assassins close to him, as before.

Dawn was breaking when, without any warning whatsoever, Pinocchio found his path barred by a deep pool full of water the color of muddy coffee.

What was there to do? With a "One, two, three!" he jumped clear across it. The Assassins jumped also, but not having measured their distance well--splash!!!--they fell right into the middle of the pool. Pinocchio who heard the splash and felt it, too, cried out, laughing, but never stopping in his race:

"A pleasant bath to you, signori!"

He thought they must surely be drowned and turned his head to see. But there were the two somber figures still following him, though their black sacks were drenched and dripping with water.

CHAPTER 15

The Assassins chase Pinocchio, catch him, and hang him to the branch of a giant oak tree.

As he ran, the Marionette felt more and more certain that he would have to give himself up into the hands of his pursuers. Suddenly he saw a little cottage gleaming white as the snow among the trees of the forest.

"If I have enough breath left with which to reach that little house, I may be saved," he said to himself.

Not waiting another moment, he darted swiftly through the woods, the Assassins still after him.

After a hard race of almost an hour, tired and out of breath, Pinocchio finally reached the door of the cottage and knocked. No one answered.

He knocked again, harder than before, for behind him he heard the steps and the labored breathing of his persecutors. The same silence followed.

As knocking was of no use, Pinocchio, in despair, began to kick and bang against the door, as if he wanted to break it. At the noise, a window opened and a lovely maiden looked out. She had azure hair and a face white as wax. Her eyes were closed and her hands crossed on her breast. With a voice so weak that it hardly could be heard, she whispered:

"No one lives in this house. Everyone is dead."

"Won't you, at least, open the door for me?" cried Pinocchio in a beseeching voice.

"I also am dead."

"Dead? What are you doing at the window, then?"

"I am waiting for the coffin to take me away."

After these words, the little girl disappeared and the window closed without a sound.

"Oh, Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair," cried Pinocchio, "open, I beg of you. Take pity on a poor boy who is being chased by two Assass--"

He did not finish, for two powerful hands grasped him by the neck and the same two horrible voices growled threateningly: "Now we have you!"

The Marionette, seeing death dancing before him, trembled so hard that the joints of his legs rattled and the coins tinkled under his tongue.

"Well," the Assassins asked, "will you open your mouth now or not? Ah! You do not answer? Very well, this time you shall open it."

Taking out two long, sharp knives, they struck two heavy blows on the Marionette's back.

Happily for him, Pinocchio was made of very hard wood and the knives broke into a thousand pieces. The Assassins looked at each other in dismay, holding the handles of the knives in their hands.

"I understand," said one of them to the other, "there is nothing left to do now but to hang him."

"To hang him," repeated the other.

They tied Pinocchio's hands behind his shoulders and slipped the noose around his neck. Throwing the rope over the high limb of a giant oak tree, they pulled till the poor Marionette hung far up in space.

Satisfied with their work, they sat on the grass waiting for Pinocchio

to give his last gasp. But after three hours the Marionette's eyes were still open, his mouth still shut and his legs kicked harder than ever.

Tired of waiting, the Assassins called to him mockingly: "Good-bye till tomorrow. When we return in the morning, we hope you'll be polite enough to let us find you dead and gone and with your mouth wide open." With these words they went.

A few minutes went by and then a wild wind started to blow. As it shrieked and moaned, the poor little sufferer was blown to and fro like the hammer of a bell. The rocking made him seasick and the noose, becoming tighter and tighter, choked him. Little by little a film covered his eyes.

Death was creeping nearer and nearer, and the Marionette still hoped for some good soul to come to his rescue, but no one appeared. As he was about to die, he thought of his poor old father, and hardly conscious of what he was saying, murmured to himself:

"Oh, Father, dear Father! If you were only here!"

These were his last words. He closed his eyes, opened his mouth, stretched out his legs, and hung there, as if he were dead.

CHAPTER 16

The Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair sends for the poor Marionette, puts him to bed, and calls three Doctors to tell her if Pinocchio is dead or alive.

If the poor Marionette had dangled there much longer, all hope would have been lost. Luckily for him, the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair once again looked out of her window. Filled with pity at the sight of the poor little fellow being knocked helplessly about by the wind, she clapped her hands sharply together three times.

At the signal, a loud whirr of wings in quick flight was heard and a large Falcon came and settled itself on the window ledge.

"What do you command, my charming Fairy?" asked the Falcon, bending his beak in deep reverence (for it must be known that, after all, the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair was none other than a very kind Fairy who had lived, for more than a thousand years, in the vicinity of the forest).

"Do you see that Marionette hanging from the limb of that giant oak tree?"

"I see him."

"Very well. Fly immediately to him. With your strong beak, break the knot which holds him tied, take him down, and lay him softly on the grass at the foot of the oak."

The Falcon flew away and after two minutes returned, saying, "I have done what you have commanded."

"How did you find him? Alive or dead?"

"At first glance, I thought he was dead. But I found I was wrong, for as soon as I loosened the knot around his neck, he gave a long sigh and mumbled with a faint voice, 'Now I feel better!'"

The Fairy clapped her hands twice. A magnificent Poodle appeared, walking on his hind legs just like a man. He was dressed in court livery. A tricorne trimmed with gold lace was set at a rakish angle over a wig of white curls that dropped down to his waist. He wore a jaunty coat of chocolate-colored velvet, with diamond buttons, and with two huge pockets which were always filled with bones, dropped there at dinner by his loving mistress. Breeches of crimson velvet, silk stockings, and low, silver-buckled slippers completed his costume. His tail was encased in a blue silk covering, which was to protect it from the rain.

"Come, Medoro," said the Fairy to him. "Get my best coach ready and set out toward the forest. On reaching the oak tree, you will find a poor, half-dead Marionette stretched out on the grass. Lift him up tenderly, place him on the silken cushions of the coach, and bring him here to me."

The Poodle, to show that he understood, wagged his silk-covered tail two or three times and set off at a quick pace.

In a few minutes, a lovely little coach, made of glass, with lining as soft as whipped cream and chocolate pudding, and stuffed with canary feathers, pulled out of the stable. It was drawn by one hundred pairs of white mice, and the Poodle sat on the coachman's seat and snapped his whip gayly in the air, as if he were a real coachman in a hurry to get to his destination.

In a quarter of an hour the coach was back. The Fairy, who was waiting at the door of the house, lifted the poor little Marionette in her arms, took him to a dainty room with mother-of-pearl walls, put him to bed, and sent immediately for the most famous doctors of the neighborhood to come to her.

One after another the doctors came, a Crow, and Owl, and a Talking Cricket.

"I should like to know, signori," said the Fairy, turning to the three doctors gathered about Pinocchio's bed, "I should like to know if this poor Marionette is dead or alive."

At this invitation, the Crow stepped out and felt Pinocchio's pulse, his nose, his little toe. Then he solemnly pronounced the following words:

"To my mind this Marionette is dead and gone; but if, by any evil chance, he were not, then that would be a sure sign that he is still alive!"

"I am sorry," said the Owl, "to have to contradict the Crow, my famous friend and colleague. To my mind this Marionette is alive; but if, by any evil chance, he were not, then that would be a sure sign that he is wholly dead!"

"And do you hold any opinion?" the Fairy asked the Talking Cricket.

"I say that a wise doctor, when he does not know what he is talking about, should know enough to keep his mouth shut. However, that Marionette is not a stranger to me. I have known him a long time!"

Pinocchio, who until then had been very quiet, shuddered so hard that the bed shook.

"That Marionette," continued the Talking Cricket, "is a rascal of the worst kind."

Pinocchio opened his eyes and closed them again.

"He is rude, lazy, a runaway."

Pinocchio hid his face under the sheets.

"That Marionette is a disobedient son who is breaking his father's heart!"

Long shuddering sobs were heard, cries, and deep sighs. Think how surprised everyone was when, on raising the sheets, they discovered Pinocchio half melted in tears!

"When the dead weep, they are beginning to recover," said the Crow solemnly.

"I am sorry to contradict my famous friend and colleague," said the Owl, "but as far as I'm concerned, I think that when the dead weep, it means they do not want to die."

CHAPTER 17

Pinocchio eats sugar, but refuses to take medicine. When the undertakers come for him, he drinks the medicine and feels better. Afterwards he tells a lie and, in punishment, his nose grows longer and longer.

As soon as the three doctors had left the room, the Fairy went to Pinocchio's bed and, touching him on the forehead, noticed that he was burning with fever.

She took a glass of water, put a white powder into it, and, handing it to the Marionette, said lovingly to him:

"Drink this, and in a few days you'll be up and well."

Pinocchio looked at the glass, made a wry face, and asked in a whining voice: "Is it sweet or bitter?"

"It is bitter, but it is good for you."

"If it is bitter, I don't want it."

"Drink it!"

"I don't like anything bitter."

"Drink it and I'll give you a lump of sugar to take the bitter taste from your mouth."

"Where's the sugar?"

"Here it is," said the Fairy, taking a lump from a golden sugar bowl.

"I want the sugar first, then I'll drink the bitter water."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes."

The Fairy gave him the sugar and Pinocchio, after chewing and swallowing it in a twinkling, said, smacking his lips:

"If only sugar were medicine! I should take it every day."

"Now keep your promise and drink these few drops of water. They'll be good for you."

Pinocchio took the glass in both hands and stuck his nose into it. He lifted it to his mouth and once more stuck his nose into it.

"It is too bitter, much too bitter! I can't drink it."

"How do you know, when you haven't even tasted it?"

"I can imagine it. I smell it. I want another lump of sugar, then I'll drink it."

The Fairy, with all the patience of a good mother, gave him more sugar and again handed him the glass.

"I can't drink it like that," the Marionette said, making more wry faces.

"Why?"

"Because that feather pillow on my feet bothers me."

The Fairy took away the pillow.

"It's no use. I can't drink it even now."

"What's the matter now?"

"I don't like the way that door looks. It's half open."

The Fairy closed the door.

"I won't drink it," cried Pinocchio, bursting out crying. "I won't drink this awful water. I won't. I won't! No, no, no, no!"

"My boy, you'll be sorry."

"I don't care."

"You are very sick."

"I don't care."

"In a few hours the fever will take you far away to another world."

"I don't care."

"Aren't you afraid of death?"

"Not a bit. I'd rather die than drink that awful medicine."

At that moment, the door of the room flew open and in came four Rabbits as black as ink, carrying a small black coffin on their shoulders.

"What do you want from me?" asked Pinocchio.

"We have come for you," said the largest Rabbit.

"For me? But I'm not dead yet!"

"No, not dead yet; but you will be in a few moments since you have refused to take the medicine which would have made you well."

"Oh, Fairy, my Fairy," the Marionette cried out, "give me that glass! Quick, please! I don't want to die! No, no, not yet--not yet!"

And holding the glass with his two hands, he swallowed the medicine at one gulp.

"Well," said the four Rabbits, "this time we have made the trip for nothing."

And turning on their heels, they marched solemnly out of the room, carrying their little black coffin and muttering and grumbling between their teeth.

In a twinkling, Pinocchio felt fine. With one leap he was out of bed and into his clothes.

The Fairy, seeing him run and jump around the room gay as a bird on wing, said to him:

"My medicine was good for you, after all, wasn't it?"

"Good indeed! It has given me new life."

"Why, then, did I have to beg you so hard to make you drink it?"

"I'm a boy, you see, and all boys hate medicine more than they do sickness."

"What a shame! Boys ought to know, after all, that medicine, taken in time, can save them from much pain and even from death."

"Next time I won't have to be begged so hard. I'll remember those black Rabbits with the black coffin on their shoulders and I'll take the glass and pouf!--down it will go!"

"Come here now and tell me how it came about that you found yourself in the hands of the Assassins."

"It happened that Fire Eater gave me five gold pieces to give to my Father, but on the way, I met a Fox and a Cat, who asked me, 'Do you want the five pieces to become two thousand?' And I said, 'Yes.' And they said, 'Come with us to the Field of Wonders.' And I said, 'Let's go.' Then they said, 'Let us stop at the Inn of the Red Lobster for dinner and after midnight we'll set out again.' We ate and went to sleep. When I awoke they were gone and I started out in the darkness all

alone. On the road I met two Assassins dressed in black coal sacks, who said to me, 'Your money or your life!' and I said, 'I haven't any money'; for, you see, I had put the money under my tongue. One of them tried to put his hand in my mouth and I bit it off and spat it out; but it wasn't a hand, it was a cat's paw. And they ran after me and I ran and ran, till at last they caught me and tied my neck with a rope and hanged me to a tree, saying, 'Tomorrow we'll come back for you and you'll be dead and your mouth will be open, and then we'll take the gold pieces that you have hidden under your tongue.'"

"Where are the gold pieces now?" the Fairy asked.

"I lost them," answered Pinocchio, but he told a lie, for he had them in his pocket.

As he spoke, his nose, long though it was, became at least two inches longer.

"And where did you lose them?"

"In the wood near by."

At this second lie, his nose grew a few more inches.

"If you lost them in the near-by wood," said the Fairy, "we'll look for them and find them, for everything that is lost there is always found."

"Ah, now I remember," replied the Marionette, becoming more and more confused. "I did not lose the gold pieces, but I swallowed them when I drank the medicine."

At this third lie, his nose became longer than ever, so long that he could not even turn around. If he turned to the right, he knocked it against the bed or into the windowpanes; if he turned to the left, he struck the walls or the door; if he raised it a bit, he almost put the Fairy's eyes out.

The Fairy sat looking at him and laughing.

"Why do you laugh?" the Marionette asked her, worried now at the sight of his growing nose.

"I am laughing at your lies."

"How do you know I am lying?"

"Lies, my boy, are known in a moment. There are two kinds of lies, lies with short legs and lies with long noses. Yours, just now, happen to have long noses."

Pinocchio, not knowing where to hide his shame, tried to escape from the room, but his nose had become so long that he could not get it out of the door.

CHAPTER 18

Pinocchio finds the Fox and the Cat again, and goes with them to sow the gold pieces in the Field of Wonders.

Crying as if his heart would break, the Marionette mourned for hours over the length of his nose. No matter how he tried, it would not go through the door. The Fairy showed no pity toward him, as she was trying to teach him a good lesson, so that he would stop telling lies, the worst habit any boy may acquire. But when she saw him, pale with fright and with his eyes half out of his head from terror, she began to feel sorry for him and clapped her hands together. A thousand woodpeckers flew in through the window and settled themselves on Pinocchio's nose. They pecked and pecked so hard at that enormous nose that in a few moments, it was the same size as before.

"How good you are, my Fairy," said Pinocchio, drying his eyes, "and how much I love you!"

"I love you, too," answered the Fairy, "and if you wish to stay with me, you may be my little brother and I'll be your good little sister."

"I should like to stay--but what about my poor father?"

"I have thought of everything. Your father has been sent for and before night he will be here."

"Really?" cried Pinocchio joyfully. "Then, my good Fairy, if you are willing, I should like to go to meet him. I cannot wait to kiss that dear old man, who has suffered so much for my sake."

"Surely; go ahead, but be careful not to lose your way. Take the wood path and you'll surely meet him."

Pinocchio set out, and as soon as he found himself in the wood, he ran like a hare. When he reached the giant oak tree he stopped, for he thought he heard a rustle in the brush. He was right. There stood the Fox and the Cat, the two traveling companions with whom he had eaten at the Inn of the Red Lobster.

"Here comes our dear Pinocchio!" cried the Fox, hugging and kissing him. "How did you happen here?"

"How did you happen here?" repeated the Cat.

"It is a long story," said the Marionette. "Let me tell it to you. The other night, when you left me alone at the Inn, I met the Assassins on the road--"

"The Assassins? Oh, my poor friend! And what did they want?"

"They wanted my gold pieces."

"Rascals!" said the Fox.

"The worst sort of rascals!" added the Cat.

"But I began to run," continued the Marionette, "and they after me, until they overtook me and hanged me to the limb of that oak."

Pinocchio pointed to the giant oak near by.

"Could anything be worse?" said the Fox.

"What an awful world to live in! Where shall we find a safe place for

gentlemen like ourselves?"

As the Fox talked thus, Pinocchio noticed that the Cat carried his right paw in a sling.

"What happened to your paw?" he asked.

The Cat tried to answer, but he became so terribly twisted in his speech that the Fox had to help him out.

"My friend is too modest to answer. I'll answer for him. About an hour ago, we met an old wolf on the road. He was half starved and begged for help. Having nothing to give him, what do you think my friend did out of the kindness of his heart? With his teeth, he bit off the paw of his front foot and threw it at that poor beast, so that he might have something to eat."

As he spoke, the Fox wiped off a tear.

Pinocchio, almost in tears himself, whispered in the Cat's ear:

"If all the cats were like you, how lucky the mice would be!"

"And what are you doing here?" the Fox asked the Marionette.

"I am waiting for my father, who will be here at any moment now."

"And your gold pieces?"

"I still have them in my pocket, except one which I spent at the Inn of the Red Lobster."

"To think that those four gold pieces might become two thousand tomorrow. Why don't you listen to me? Why don't you sow them in the Field of Wonders?"

"Today it is impossible. I'll go with you some other time."

"Another day will be too late," said the Fox.

"Why?"

"Because that field has been bought by a very rich man, and today is the last day that it will be open to the public."

"How far is this Field of Wonders?"

"Only two miles away. Will you come with us? We'll be there in half an hour. You can sow the money, and, after a few minutes, you will gather your two thousand coins and return home rich. Are you coming?"

Pinocchio hesitated a moment before answering, for he remembered the good Fairy, old Geppetto, and the advice of the Talking Cricket. Then he ended by doing what all boys do, when they have no heart and little brain. He shrugged his shoulders and said to the Fox and the Cat:

"Let us go! I am with you."

And they went.

They walked and walked for a half a day at least and at last they came

to the town called the City of Simple Simons. As soon as they entered the town, Pinocchio noticed that all the streets were filled with hairless dogs, yawning from hunger; with sheared sheep, trembling with cold; with combless chickens, begging for a grain of wheat; with large butterflies, unable to use their wings because they had sold all their lovely colors; with tailless peacocks, ashamed to show themselves; and with bedraggled pheasants, scuttling away hurriedly, grieving for their bright feathers of gold and silver, lost to them forever.

Through this crowd of paupers and beggars, a beautiful coach passed now and again. Within it sat either a Fox, a Hawk, or a Vulture.

"Where is the Field of Wonders?" asked Pinocchio, growing tired of waiting.

"Be patient. It is only a few more steps away."

They passed through the city and, just outside the walls, they stepped into a lonely field, which looked more or less like any other field.

"Here we are," said the Fox to the Marionette. "Dig a hole here and put the gold pieces into it."

The Marionette obeyed. He dug the hole, put the four gold pieces into it, and covered them up very carefully. "Now," said the Fox, "go to that near-by brook, bring back a pail full of water, and sprinkle it over the spot."

Pinocchio followed the directions closely, but, as he had no pail, he pulled off his shoe, filled it with water, and sprinkled the earth which covered the gold. Then he asked:

"Anything else?"

"Nothing else," answered the Fox. "Now we can go. Return here within twenty minutes and you will find the vine grown and the branches filled with gold pieces."

Pinocchio, beside himself with joy, thanked the Fox and the Cat many times and promised them each a beautiful gift.

"We don't want any of your gifts," answered the two rogues. "It is enough for us that we have helped you to become rich with little or no trouble. For this we are as happy as kings."

They said good-by to Pinocchio and, wishing him good luck, went on their way.

CHAPTER 19

Pinocchio is robbed of his gold pieces and, in punishment, is sentenced to four months in prison.

If the Marionette had been told to wait a day instead of twenty minutes, the time could not have seemed longer to him. He walked impatiently to and fro and finally turned his nose toward the Field of Wonders.

And as he walked with hurried steps, his heart beat with an excited tic,

tac, tic, tac, just as if it were a wall clock, and his busy brain kept thinking:

"What if, instead of a thousand, I should find two thousand? Or if, instead of two thousand, I should find five thousand--or one hundred thousand? I'll build myself a beautiful palace, with a thousand stables filled with a thousand wooden horses to play with, a cellar overflowing with lemonade and ice cream soda, and a library of candies and fruits, cakes and cookies."

Thus amusing himself with fancies, he came to the field. There he stopped to see if, by any chance, a vine filled with gold coins was in sight. But he saw nothing! He took a few steps forward, and still nothing! He stepped into the field. He went up to the place where he had dug the hole and buried the gold pieces. Again nothing! Pinocchio became very thoughtful and, forgetting his good manners altogether, he pulled a hand out of his pocket and gave his head a thorough scratching.

As he did so, he heard a hearty burst of laughter close to his head. He turned sharply, and there, just above him on the branch of a tree, sat a large Parrot, busily preening his feathers.

"What are you laughing at?" Pinocchio asked peevishly.

"I am laughing because, in preening my feathers, I tickled myself under the wings."

The Marionette did not answer. He walked to the brook, filled his shoe with water, and once more sprinkled the ground which covered the gold pieces.

Another burst of laughter, even more impertinent than the first, was heard in the quiet field.

"Well," cried the Marionette, angrily this time, "may I know, Mr. Parrot, what amuses you so?"

"I am laughing at those simpletons who believe everything they hear and who allow themselves to be caught so easily in the traps set for them."

"Do you, perhaps, mean me?"

"I certainly do mean you, poor Pinocchio--you who are such a little silly as to believe that gold can be sown in a field just like beans or squash. I, too, believed that once and today I am very sorry for it. Today (but too late!) I have reached the conclusion that, in order to come by money honestly, one must work and know how to earn it with hand or brain."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said the Marionette, who was beginning to tremble with fear.

"Too bad! I'll explain myself better," said the Parrot. "While you were away in the city the Fox and the Cat returned here in a great hurry. They took the four gold pieces which you have buried and ran away as fast as the wind. If you can catch them, you're a brave one!"

Pinocchio's mouth opened wide. He would not believe the Parrot's words and began to dig away furiously at the earth. He dug and he dug till the hole was as big as himself, but no money was there. Every penny was gone.

In desperation, he ran to the city and went straight to the courthouse to report the robbery to the magistrate. The Judge was a Monkey, a large Gorilla venerable with age. A flowing white beard covered his chest and he wore gold-rimmed spectacles from which the glasses had dropped out. The reason for wearing these, he said, was that his eyes had been weakened by the work of many years.

Pinocchio, standing before him, told his pitiful tale, word by word. He gave the names and the descriptions of the robbers and begged for justice.

The Judge listened to him with great patience. A kind look shone in his eyes. He became very much interested in the story; he felt moved; he almost wept. When the Marionette had no more to say, the Judge put out his hand and rang a bell.

At the sound, two large Mastiffs appeared, dressed in Carabineers' uniforms.

Then the magistrate, pointing to Pinocchio, said in a very solemn voice:

"This poor simpleton has been robbed of four gold pieces. Take him, therefore, and throw him into prison." The Marionette, on hearing this sentence passed upon him, was thoroughly stunned. He tried to protest, but the two officers clapped their paws on his mouth and hustled him away to jail.

There he had to remain for four long, weary months. And if it had not been for a very lucky chance, he probably would have had to stay there longer. For, my dear children, you must know that it happened just then that the young emperor who ruled over the City of Simple Simons had gained a great victory over his enemy, and in celebration thereof, he had ordered illuminations, fireworks, shows of all kinds, and, best of all, the opening of all prison doors.

"If the others go, I go, too," said Pinocchio to the Jailer.

"Not you," answered the Jailer. "You are one of those--"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Pinocchio, "I, too, am a thief."

"In that case you also are free," said the Jailer. Taking off his cap, he bowed low and opened the door of the prison, and Pinocchio ran out and away, with never a look backward.

CHAPTER 20

Freed from prison, Pinocchio sets out to return to the Fairy; but on the way he meets a Serpent and later is caught in a trap.

Fancy the happiness of Pinocchio on finding himself free! Without saying yes or no, he fled from the city and set out on the road that was to take him back to the house of the lovely Fairy.

It had rained for many days, and the road was so muddy that, at times, Pinocchio sank down almost to his knees.

But he kept on bravely.

Tormented by the wish to see his father and his fairy sister with azure hair, he raced like a greyhound. As he ran, he was splashed with mud even up to his cap.

"How unhappy I have been," he said to himself. "And yet I deserve everything, for I am certainly very stubborn and stupid! I will always have my own way. I won't listen to those who love me and who have more brains than I. But from now on, I'll be different and I'll try to become a most obedient boy. I have found out, beyond any doubt whatever, that disobedient boys are certainly far from happy, and that, in the long run, they always lose out. I wonder if Father is waiting for me. Will I find him at the Fairy's house? It is so long, poor man, since I have seen him, and I do so want his love and his kisses. And will the Fairy ever forgive me for all I have done? She who has been so good to me and to whom I owe my life! Can there be a worse or more heartless boy than I am anywhere?"

As he spoke, he stopped suddenly, frozen with terror.

What was the matter? An immense Serpent lay stretched across the road--a Serpent with a bright green skin, fiery eyes which glowed and burned, and a pointed tail that smoked like a chimney.

How frightened was poor Pinocchio! He ran back wildly for half a mile, and at last settled himself atop a heap of stones to wait for the Serpent to go on his way and leave the road clear for him.

He waited an hour; two hours; three hours; but the Serpent was always there, and even from afar one could see the flash of his red eyes and the column of smoke which rose from his long, pointed tail.

Pinocchio, trying to feel very brave, walked straight up to him and said in a sweet, soothing voice:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Serpent, would you be so kind as to step aside to let me pass?"

He might as well have talked to a wall. The Serpent never moved.

Once more, in the same sweet voice, he spoke:

"You must know, Mr. Serpent, that I am going home where my father is waiting for me. It is so long since I have seen him! Would you mind very much if I passed?"

He waited for some sign of an answer to his questions, but the answer did not come. On the contrary, the green Serpent, who had seemed, until then, wide awake and full of life, became suddenly very quiet and still. His eyes closed and his tail stopped smoking.

"Is he dead, I wonder?" said Pinocchio, rubbing his hands together happily. Without a moment's hesitation, he started to step over him, but he had just raised one leg when the Serpent shot up like a spring and the Marionette fell head over heels backward. He fell so awkwardly that his head stuck in the mud, and there he stood with his legs straight up in the air.

At the sight of the Marionette kicking and squirming like a young whirlwind, the Serpent laughed so heartily and so long that at last he burst an artery and died on the spot.

Pinocchio freed himself from his awkward position and once more began to run in order to reach the Fairy's house before dark. As he went, the pangs of hunger grew so strong that, unable to withstand them, he jumped into a field to pick a few grapes that tempted him. Woe to him!

No sooner had he reached the grapevine than--crack! went his legs.

The poor Marionette was caught in a trap set there by a Farmer for some Weasels which came every night to steal his chickens.

CHAPTER 21

Pinocchio is caught by a Farmer, who uses him as a watchdog for his chicken coop.

Pinocchio, as you may well imagine, began to scream and weep and beg; but all was of no use, for no houses were to be seen and not a soul passed by on the road.

Night came on.

A little because of the sharp pain in his legs, a little because of fright at finding himself alone in the darkness of the field, the Marionette was about to faint, when he saw a tiny Glowworm flickering by. He called to her and said:

"Dear little Glowworm, will you set me free?"

"Poor little fellow!" replied the Glowworm, stopping to look at him with pity. "How came you to be caught in this trap?"

"I stepped into this lonely field to take a few grapes and--"

"Are the grapes yours?"

"No."

"Who has taught you to take things that do not belong to you?"

"I was hungry."

"Hunger, my boy, is no reason for taking something which belongs to another."

"It's true, it's true!" cried Pinocchio in tears. "I won't do it again."

Just then, the conversation was interrupted by approaching footsteps. It was the owner of the field, who was coming on tiptoes to see if, by chance, he had caught the Weasels which had been eating his chickens.

Great was his surprise when, on holding up his lantern, he saw that, instead of a Weasel, he had caught a boy!

"Ah, you little thief!" said the Farmer in an angry voice. "So you are the one who steals my chickens!"

"Not I! No, no!" cried Pinocchio, sobbing bitterly. "I came here only to

take a very few grapes."

"He who steals grapes may very easily steal chickens also. Take my word for it, I'll give you a lesson that you'll remember for a long while."

He opened the trap, grabbed the Marionette by the collar, and carried him to the house as if he were a puppy. When he reached the yard in front of the house, he flung him to the ground, put a foot on his neck, and said to him roughly: "It is late now and it's time for bed. Tomorrow we'll settle matters. In the meantime, since my watchdog died today, you may take his place and guard my henhouse."

No sooner said than done. He slipped a dog collar around Pinocchio's neck and tightened it so that it would not come off. A long iron chain was tied to the collar. The other end of the chain was nailed to the wall.

"If tonight it should happen to rain," said the Farmer, "you can sleep in that little doghouse near-by, where you will find plenty of straw for a soft bed. It has been Melampo's bed for three years, and it will be good enough for you. And if, by any chance, any thieves should come, be sure to bark!"

After this last warning, the Farmer went into the house and closed the door and barred it.

Poor Pinocchio huddled close to the doghouse more dead than alive from cold, hunger, and fright. Now and again he pulled and tugged at the collar which nearly choked him and cried out in a weak voice:

"I deserve it! Yes, I deserve it! I have been nothing but a truant and a vagabond. I have never obeyed anyone and I have always done as I pleased. If I were only like so many others and had studied and worked and stayed with my poor old father, I should not find myself here now, in this field and in the darkness, taking the place of a farmer's watchdog. Oh, if I could start all over again! But what is done can't be undone, and I must be patient!"

After this little sermon to himself, which came from the very depths of his heart, Pinocchio went into the doghouse and fell asleep.

CHAPTER 22

Pinocchio discovers the thieves and, as a reward for faithfulness, he regains his liberty.

Even though a boy may be very unhappy, he very seldom loses sleep over his worries. The Marionette, being no exception to this rule, slept on peacefully for a few hours till well along toward midnight, when he was awakened by strange whisperings and stealthy sounds coming from the yard. He stuck his nose out of the doghouse and saw four slender, hairy animals. They were Weasels, small animals very fond of both eggs and chickens. One of them left her companions and, going to the door of the doghouse, said in a sweet voice:

"Good evening, Melampo."

"My name is not Melampo," answered Pinocchio.

"Who are you, then?"

"I am Pinocchio."

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm the watchdog."

"But where is Melampo? Where is the old dog who used to live in this house?"

"He died this morning."

"Died? Poor beast! He was so good! Still, judging by your face, I think you, too, are a good-natured dog."

"I beg your pardon, I am not a dog!"

"What are you, then?"

"I am a Marionette."

"Are you taking the place of the watchdog?"

"I'm sorry to say that I am. I'm being punished."

"Well, I shall make the same terms with you that we had with the dead Melampo. I am sure you will be glad to hear them."

"And what are the terms?"

"This is our plan: We'll come once in a while, as in the past, to pay a visit to this henhouse, and we'll take away eight chickens. Of these, seven are for us, and one for you, provided, of course, that you will make believe you are sleeping and will not bark for the Farmer."

"Did Melampo really do that?" asked Pinocchio.

"Indeed he did, and because of that we were the best of friends. Sleep away peacefully, and remember that before we go we shall leave you a nice fat chicken all ready for your breakfast in the morning. Is that understood?"

"Even too well," answered Pinocchio. And shaking his head in a threatening manner, he seemed to say, "We'll talk this over in a few minutes, my friends."

As soon as the four Weasels had talked things over, they went straight to the chicken coop which stood close to the doghouse. Digging busily with teeth and claws, they opened the little door and slipped in. But they were no sooner in than they heard the door close with a sharp bang.

The one who had done the trick was Pinocchio, who, not satisfied with that, dragged a heavy stone in front of it. That done, he started to bark. And he barked as if he were a real watchdog: "Bow, wow, wow! Bow, wow!"

The Farmer heard the loud barks and jumped out of bed. Taking his gun, he leaped to the window and shouted: "What's the matter?"

"The thieves are here," answered Pinocchio.

"Where are they?"

"In the chicken coop."

"I'll come down in a second."

And, in fact, he was down in the yard in a twinkling and running toward the chicken coop.

He opened the door, pulled out the Weasels one by one, and, after tying them in a bag, said to them in a happy voice: "You're in my hands at last! I could punish you now, but I'll wait! In the morning you may come with me to the inn and there you'll make a fine dinner for some hungry mortal. It is really too great an honor for you, one you do not deserve; but, as you see, I am really a very kind and generous man and I am going to do this for you!"

Then he went up to Pinocchio and began to pet and caress him.

"How did you ever find them out so quickly? And to think that Melampo, my faithful Melampo, never saw them in all these years!"

The Marionette could have told, then and there, all he knew about the shameful contract between the dog and the Weasels, but thinking of the dead dog, he said to himself: "Melampo is dead. What is the use of accusing him? The dead are gone and they cannot defend themselves. The best thing to do is to leave them in peace!"

"Were you awake or asleep when they came?" continued the Farmer.

"I was asleep," answered Pinocchio, "but they awakened me with their whisperings. One of them even came to the door of the doghouse and said to me, 'If you promise not to bark, we will make you a present of one of the chickens for your breakfast.' Did you hear that? They had the audacity to make such a proposition as that to me! For you must know that, though I am a very wicked Marionette full of faults, still I never have been, nor ever shall be, bribed."

"Fine boy!" cried the Farmer, slapping him on the shoulder in a friendly way. "You ought to be proud of yourself. And to show you what I think of you, you are free from this instant!"

And he slipped the dog collar from his neck.

CHAPTER 23

Pinocchio weeps upon learning that the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair is dead. He meets a Pigeon, who carries him to the seashore. He throws himself into the sea to go to the aid of his father.

As soon as Pinocchio no longer felt the shameful weight of the dog collar around his neck, he started to run across the fields and meadows, and never stopped till he came to the main road that was to take him to the Fairy's house.

When he reached it, he looked into the valley far below him and there

he saw the wood where unluckily he had met the Fox and the Cat, and the tall oak tree where he had been hanged; but though he searched far and near, he could not see the house where the Fairy with the Azure Hair lived.

He became terribly frightened and, running as fast as he could, he finally came to the spot where it had once stood. The little house was no longer there. In its place lay a small marble slab, which bore this sad inscription:

HERE LIES
THE LOVELY FAIRY WITH AZURE HAIR
WHO DIED OF GRIEF
WHEN ABANDONED BY
HER LITTLE BROTHER PINOCCHIO

The poor Marionette was heartbroken at reading these words. He fell to the ground and, covering the cold marble with kisses, burst into bitter tears. He cried all night, and dawn found him still there, though his tears had dried and only hard, dry sobs shook his wooden frame. But these were so loud that they could be heard by the faraway hills.

As he sobbed he said to himself:

"Oh, my Fairy, my dear, dear Fairy, why did you die? Why did I not die, who am so bad, instead of you, who are so good? And my father--where can he be? Please dear Fairy, tell me where he is and I shall never, never leave him again! You are not really dead, are you? If you love me, you will come back, alive as before. Don't you feel sorry for me? I'm so lonely. If the two Assassins come, they'll hang me again from the giant oak tree and I will really die, this time. What shall I do alone in the world? Now that you are dead and my father is lost, where shall I eat? Where shall I sleep? Who will make my new clothes? Oh, I want to die! Yes, I want to die! Oh, oh, oh!"

Poor Pinocchio! He even tried to tear his hair, but as it was only painted on his wooden head, he could not even pull it.

Just then a large Pigeon flew far above him. Seeing the Marionette, he cried to him:

"Tell me, little boy, what are you doing there?"

"Can't you see? I'm crying," cried Pinocchio, lifting his head toward the voice and rubbing his eyes with his sleeve.

"Tell me," asked the Pigeon, "do you by chance know of a Marionette, Pinocchio by name?"

"Pinocchio! Did you say Pinocchio?" replied the Marionette, jumping to his feet. "Why, I am Pinocchio!"

At this answer, the Pigeon flew swiftly down to the earth. He was much larger than a turkey.

"Then you know Geppetto also?"

"Do I know him? He's my father, my poor, dear father! Has he, perhaps, spoken to you of me? Will you take me to him? Is he still alive? Answer me, please! Is he still alive?"

"I left him three days ago on the shore of a large sea."

"What was he doing?"

"He was building a little boat with which to cross the ocean. For the last four months, that poor man has been wandering around Europe, looking for you. Not having found you yet, he has made up his mind to look for you in the New World, far across the ocean."

"How far is it from here to the shore?" asked Pinocchio anxiously.

"More than fifty miles."

"Fifty miles? Oh, dear Pigeon, how I wish I had your wings!"

"If you want to come, I'll take you with me."

"How?"

"Astride my back. Are you very heavy?"

"Heavy? Not at all. I'm only a feather."

"Very well."

Saying nothing more, Pinocchio jumped on the Pigeon's back and, as he settled himself, he cried out gayly:

"Gallop on, gallop on, my pretty steed! I'm in a great hurry."

The Pigeon flew away, and in a few minutes he had reached the clouds. The Marionette looked to see what was below them. His head swam and he was so frightened that he clutched wildly at the Pigeon's neck to keep himself from falling.

They flew all day. Toward evening the Pigeon said:

"I'm very thirsty!"

"And I'm very hungry!" said Pinocchio.

"Let us stop a few minutes at that pigeon coop down there. Then we can go on and be at the seashore in the morning."

They went into the empty coop and there they found nothing but a bowl of water and a small basket filled with chick-peas.

The Marionette had always hated chick-peas. According to him, they had always made him sick; but that night he ate them with a relish. As he finished them, he turned to the Pigeon and said:

"I never should have thought that chick-peas could be so good!"

"You must remember, my boy," answered the Pigeon, "that hunger is the best sauce!"

After resting a few minutes longer, they set out again. The next morning they were at the seashore.

Pinocchio jumped off the Pigeon's back, and the Pigeon, not wanting any thanks for a kind deed, flew away swiftly and disappeared.

The shore was full of people, shrieking and tearing their hair as they looked toward the sea.

"What has happened?" asked Pinocchio of a little old woman.

"A poor old father lost his only son some time ago and today he built a tiny boat for himself in order to go in search of him across the ocean. The water is very rough and we're afraid he will be drowned."

"Where is the little boat?"

"There. Straight down there," answered the little old woman, pointing to a tiny shadow, no bigger than a nutshell, floating on the sea.

Pinocchio looked closely for a few minutes and then gave a sharp cry:

"It's my father! It's my father!"

Meanwhile, the little boat, tossed about by the angry waters, appeared and disappeared in the waves. And Pinocchio, standing on a high rock, tired out with searching, waved to him with hand and cap and even with his nose.

It looked as if Geppetto, though far away from the shore, recognized his son, for he took off his cap and waved also. He seemed to be trying to make everyone understand that he would come back if he were able, but the sea was so heavy that he could do nothing with his oars. Suddenly a huge wave came and the boat disappeared.

They waited and waited for it, but it was gone.

"Poor man!" said the fisher folk on the shore, whispering a prayer as they turned to go home.

Just then a desperate cry was heard. Turning around, the fisher folk saw Pinocchio dive into the sea and heard him cry out:

"I'll save him! I'll save my father!"

The Marionette, being made of wood, floated easily along and swam like a fish in the rough water. Now and again he disappeared only to reappear once more. In a twinkling, he was far away from land. At last he was completely lost to view.

"Poor boy!" cried the fisher folk on the shore, and again they mumbled a few prayers, as they returned home.

CHAPTER 24

Pinocchio reaches the Island of the Busy Bees and finds the Fairy once more.

Pinocchio, spurred on by the hope of finding his father and of being in time to save him, swam all night long.

And what a horrible night it was! It poured rain, it hailed, it thundered, and the lightning was so bright that it turned the night into

day.

At dawn, he saw, not far away from him, a long stretch of sand. It was an island in the middle of the sea.

Pinocchio tried his best to get there, but he couldn't. The waves played with him and tossed him about as if he were a twig or a bit of straw. At last, and luckily for him, a tremendous wave tossed him to the very spot where he wanted to be. The blow from the wave was so strong that, as he fell to the ground, his joints cracked and almost broke. But, nothing daunted, he jumped to his feet and cried:

"Once more I have escaped with my life!"

Little by little the sky cleared. The sun came out in full splendor and the sea became as calm as a lake.

Then the Marionette took off his clothes and laid them on the sand to dry. He looked over the waters to see whether he might catch sight of a boat with a little man in it. He searched and he searched, but he saw nothing except sea and sky and far away a few sails, so small that they might have been birds.

"If only I knew the name of this island!" he said to himself. "If I even knew what kind of people I would find here! But whom shall I ask? There is no one here."

The idea of finding himself in so lonesome a spot made him so sad that he was about to cry, but just then he saw a big Fish swimming near-by, with his head far out of the water.

Not knowing what to call him, the Marionette said to him:

"Hey there, Mr. Fish, may I have a word with you?"

"Even two, if you want," answered the fish, who happened to be a very polite Dolphin.

"Will you please tell me if, on this island, there are places where one may eat without necessarily being eaten?"

"Surely, there are," answered the Dolphin. "In fact you'll find one not far from this spot."

"And how shall I get there?"

"Take that path on your left and follow your nose. You can't go wrong."

"Tell me another thing. You who travel day and night through the sea, did you not perhaps meet a little boat with my father in it?"

"And who is your father?"

"He is the best father in the world, even as I am the worst son that can be found."

"In the storm of last night," answered the Dolphin, "the little boat must have been swamped."

"And my father?"

"By this time, he must have been swallowed by the Terrible Shark, which, for the last few days, has been bringing terror to these waters."

"Is this Shark very big?" asked Pinocchio, who was beginning to tremble with fright.

"Is he big?" replied the Dolphin. "Just to give you an idea of his size, let me tell you that he is larger than a five story building and that he has a mouth so big and so deep, that a whole train and engine could easily get into it."

"Mother mine!" cried the Marionette, scared to death; and dressing himself as fast as he could, he turned to the Dolphin and said:

"Farewell, Mr. Fish. Pardon the bother, and many thanks for your kindness."

This said, he took the path at so swift a gait that he seemed to fly, and at every small sound he heard, he turned in fear to see whether the Terrible Shark, five stories high and with a train in his mouth, was following him.

After walking a half hour, he came to a small country called the Land of the Busy Bees. The streets were filled with people running to and fro about their tasks. Everyone worked, everyone had something to do. Even if one were to search with a lantern, not one idle man or one tramp could have been found.

"I understand," said Pinocchio at once wearily, "this is no place for me! I was not born for work."

But in the meantime, he began to feel hungry, for it was twenty-four hours since he had eaten.

What was to be done?

There were only two means left to him in order to get a bite to eat. He had either to work or to beg.

He was ashamed to beg, because his father had always preached to him that begging should be done only by the sick or the old. He had said that the real poor in this world, deserving of our pity and help, were only those who, either through age or sickness, had lost the means of earning their bread with their own hands. All others should work, and if they didn't, and went hungry, so much the worse for them.

Just then a man passed by, worn out and wet with perspiration, pulling, with difficulty, two heavy carts filled with coal.

Pinocchio looked at him and, judging him by his looks to be a kind man, said to him with eyes downcast in shame:

"Will you be so good as to give me a penny, for I am faint with hunger?"

"Not only one penny," answered the Coal Man. "I'll give you four if you will help me pull these two wagons."

"I am surprised!" answered the Marionette, very much offended. "I wish you to know that I never have been a donkey, nor have I ever pulled a wagon."

"So much the better for you!" answered the Coal Man. "Then, my boy, if you are really faint with hunger, eat two slices of your pride; and I hope they don't give you indigestion."

A few minutes after, a Bricklayer passed by, carrying a pail full of plaster on his shoulder.

"Good man, will you be kind enough to give a penny to a poor boy who is yawning from hunger?"

"Gladly," answered the Bricklayer. "Come with me and carry some plaster, and instead of one penny, I'll give you five."

"But the plaster is heavy," answered Pinocchio, "and the work too hard for me."

"If the work is too hard for you, my boy, enjoy your yawns and may they bring you luck!"

In less than a half hour, at least twenty people passed and Pinocchio begged of each one, but they all answered:

"Aren't you ashamed? Instead of being a beggar in the streets, why don't you look for work and earn your own bread?"

Finally a little woman went by carrying two water jugs.

"Good woman, will you allow me to have a drink from one of your jugs?" asked Pinocchio, who was burning up with thirst.

"With pleasure, my boy!" she answered, setting the two jugs on the ground before him.

When Pinocchio had had his fill, he grumbled, as he wiped his mouth:

"My thirst is gone. If I could only as easily get rid of my hunger!"

On hearing these words, the good little woman immediately said:

"If you help me to carry these jugs home, I'll give you a slice of bread."

Pinocchio looked at the jug and said neither yes nor no.

"And with the bread, I'll give you a nice dish of cauliflower with white sauce on it."

Pinocchio gave the jug another look and said neither yes nor no.

"And after the cauliflower, some cake and jam."

At this last bribery, Pinocchio could no longer resist and said firmly:

"Very well. I'll take the jug home for you."

The jug was very heavy, and the Marionette, not being strong enough to carry it with his hands, had to put it on his head.

When they arrived home, the little woman made Pinocchio sit down at a small table and placed before him the bread, the cauliflower, and the cake. Pinocchio did not eat; he devoured. His stomach seemed a

bottomless pit.

His hunger finally appeased, he raised his head to thank his kind benefactress. But he had not looked at her long when he gave a cry of surprise and sat there with his eyes wide open, his fork in the air, and his mouth filled with bread and cauliflower.

"Why all this surprise?" asked the good woman, laughing.

"Because--" answered Pinocchio, stammering and stuttering, "because--you look like--you remind me of--yes, yes, the same voice, the same eyes, the same hair--yes, yes, yes, you also have the same azure hair she had--Oh, my little Fairy, my little Fairy! Tell me that it is you! Don't make me cry any longer! If you only knew! I have cried so much, I have suffered so!"

And Pinocchio threw himself on the floor and clasped the knees of the mysterious little woman.

CHAPTER 25

Pinocchio promises the Fairy to be good and to study, as he is growing tired of being a Marionette, and wishes to become a real boy.

If Pinocchio cried much longer, the little woman thought he would melt away, so she finally admitted that she was the little Fairy with Azure Hair.

"You rascal of a Marionette! How did you know it was I?" she asked, laughing.

"My love for you told me who you were."

"Do you remember? You left me when I was a little girl and now you find me a grown woman. I am so old, I could almost be your mother!"

"I am very glad of that, for then I can call you mother instead of sister. For a long time I have wanted a mother, just like other boys. But how did you grow so quickly?"

"That's a secret!"

"Tell it to me. I also want to grow a little. Look at me! I have never grown higher than a penny's worth of cheese."

"But you can't grow," answered the Fairy.

"Why not?"

"Because Marionettes never grow. They are born Marionettes, they live Marionettes, and they die Marionettes."

"Oh, I'm tired of always being a Marionette!" cried Pinocchio disgustedly. "It's about time for me to grow into a man as everyone else does."

"And you will if you deserve it--"

"Really? What can I do to deserve it?"

"It's a very simple matter. Try to act like a well-behaved child."

"Don't you think I do?"

"Far from it! Good boys are obedient, and you, on the contrary--"

"And I never obey."

"Good boys love study and work, but you--"

"And I, on the contrary, am a lazy fellow and a tramp all year round."

"Good boys always tell the truth."

"And I always tell lies."

"Good boys go gladly to school."

"And I get sick if I go to school. From now on I'll be different."

"Do you promise?"

"I promise. I want to become a good boy and be a comfort to my father. Where is my poor father now?"

"I do not know."

"Will I ever be lucky enough to find him and embrace him once more?"

"I think so. Indeed, I am sure of it."

At this answer, Pinocchio's happiness was very great. He grasped the Fairy's hands and kissed them so hard that it looked as if he had lost his head. Then lifting his face, he looked at her lovingly and asked: "Tell me, little Mother, it isn't true that you are dead, is it?"

"It doesn't seem so," answered the Fairy, smiling.

"If you only knew how I suffered and how I wept when I read 'Here lies--'"

"I know it, and for that I have forgiven you. The depth of your sorrow made me see that you have a kind heart. There is always hope for boys with hearts such as yours, though they may often be very mischievous. This is the reason why I have come so far to look for you. From now on, I'll be your own little mother."

"Oh! How lovely!" cried Pinocchio, jumping with joy.

"You will obey me always and do as I wish?"

"Gladly, very gladly, more than gladly!"

"Beginning tomorrow," said the Fairy, "you'll go to school every day."

Pinocchio's face fell a little.

"Then you will choose the trade you like best."

Pinocchio became more serious.

"What are you mumbling to yourself?" asked the Fairy.

"I was just saying," whined the Marionette in a whisper, "that it seems too late for me to go to school now."

"No, indeed. Remember it is never too late to learn."

"But I don't want either trade or profession."

"Why?"

"Because work wearies me!"

"My dear boy," said the Fairy, "people who speak as you do usually end their days either in a prison or in a hospital. A man, remember, whether rich or poor, should do something in this world. No one can find happiness without work. Woe betide the lazy fellow! Laziness is a serious illness and one must cure it immediately; yes, even from early childhood. If not, it will kill you in the end."

These words touched Pinocchio's heart. He lifted his eyes to his Fairy and said seriously: "I'll work; I'll study; I'll do all you tell me. After all, the life of a Marionette has grown very tiresome to me and I want to become a boy, no matter how hard it is. You promise that, do you not?"

"Yes, I promise, and now it is up to you."

CHAPTER 26

Pinocchio goes to the seashore with his friends to see the Terrible Shark.

In the morning, bright and early, Pinocchio started for school.

Imagine what the boys said when they saw a Marionette enter the classroom! They laughed until they cried. Everyone played tricks on him. One pulled his hat off, another tugged at his coat, a third tried to paint a mustache under his nose. One even attempted to tie strings to his feet and his hands to make him dance.

For a while Pinocchio was very calm and quiet. Finally, however, he lost all patience and turning to his tormentors, he said to them threateningly:

"Careful, boys, I haven't come here to be made fun of. I'll respect you and I want you to respect me."

"Hurrah for Dr. Know-all! You have spoken like a printed book!" howled the boys, bursting with laughter. One of them, more impudent than the rest, put out his hand to pull the Marionette's nose.

But he was not quick enough, for Pinocchio stretched his leg under the table and kicked him hard on the shin.

"Oh, what hard feet!" cried the boy, rubbing the spot where the

Marionette had kicked him.

"And what elbows! They are even harder than the feet!" shouted another one, who, because of some other trick, had received a blow in the stomach.

With that kick and that blow Pinocchio gained everybody's favor. Everyone admired him, danced attendance upon him, petted and caressed him.

As the days passed into weeks, even the teacher praised him, for he saw him attentive, hard working, and wide awake, always the first to come in the morning, and the last to leave when school was over.

Pinocchio's only fault was that he had too many friends. Among these were many well-known rascals, who cared not a jot for study or for success.

The teacher warned him each day, and even the good Fairy repeated to him many times:

"Take care, Pinocchio! Those bad companions will sooner or later make you lose your love for study. Some day they will lead you astray."

"There's no such danger," answered the Marionette, shrugging his shoulders and pointing to his forehead as if to say, "I'm too wise."

So it happened that one day, as he was walking to school, he met some boys who ran up to him and said:

"Have you heard the news?"

"No!"

"A Shark as big as a mountain has been seen near the shore."

"Really? I wonder if it could be the same one I heard of when my father was drowned?"

"We are going to see it. Are you coming?"

"No, not I. I must go to school."

"What do you care about school? You can go there tomorrow. With a lesson more or less, we are always the same donkeys."

"And what will the teacher say?"

"Let him talk. He is paid to grumble all day long."

"And my mother?"

"Mothers don't know anything," answered those scamps.

"Do you know what I'll do?" said Pinocchio. "For certain reasons of mine, I, too, want to see that Shark; but I'll go after school. I can see him then as well as now."

"Poor simpleton!" cried one of the boys. "Do you think that a fish of that size will stand there waiting for you? He turns and off he goes, and no one will ever be the wiser."

"How long does it take from here to the shore?" asked the Marionette.
"One hour there and back."

"Very well, then. Let's see who gets there first!" cried Pinocchio.

At the signal, the little troop, with books under their arms, dashed across the fields. Pinocchio led the way, running as if on wings, the others following as fast as they could.

Now and again, he looked back and, seeing his followers hot and tired, and with tongues hanging out, he laughed out heartily. Unhappy boy! If he had only known then the dreadful things that were to happen to him on account of his disobedience!

CHAPTER 27

The great battle between Pinocchio and his playmates. One is wounded. Pinocchio is arrested.

Going like the wind, Pinocchio took but a very short time to reach the shore. He glanced all about him, but there was no sign of a Shark. The sea was as smooth as glass.

"Hey there, boys! Where's that Shark?" he asked, turning to his playmates.

"He may have gone for his breakfast," said one of them, laughing.

"Or, perhaps, he went to bed for a little nap," said another, laughing also.

From the answers and the laughter which followed them, Pinocchio understood that the boys had played a trick on him.

"What now?" he said angrily to them. "What's the joke?"

"Oh, the joke's on you!" cried his tormentors, laughing more heartily than ever, and dancing gayly around the Marionette.

"And that is--?"

"That we have made you stay out of school to come with us. Aren't you ashamed of being such a goody-goody, and of studying so hard? You never have a bit of enjoyment."

"And what is it to you, if I do study?"

"What does the teacher think of us, you mean?"

"Why?"

"Don't you see? If you study and we don't, we pay for it. After all, it's only fair to look out for ourselves."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Hate school and books and teachers, as we all do. They are your worst enemies, you know, and they like to make you as unhappy as they can."

"And if I go on studying, what will you do to me?"

"You'll pay for it!"

"Really, you amuse me," answered the Marionette, nodding his head.

"Hey, Pinocchio," cried the tallest of them all, "that will do. We are tired of hearing you bragging about yourself, you little turkey cock! You may not be afraid of us, but remember we are not afraid of you, either! You are alone, you know, and we are seven."

"Like the seven sins," said Pinocchio, still laughing.

"Did you hear that? He has insulted us all. He has called us sins."

"Pinocchio, apologize for that, or look out!"

"Cuck--oo!" said the Marionette, mocking them with his thumb to his nose.

"You'll be sorry!"

"Cuck--oo!"

"We'll whip you soundly!"

"Cuck--oo!"

"You'll go home with a broken nose!"

"Cuck--oo!"

"Very well, then! Take that, and keep it for your supper," called out the boldest of his tormentors.

And with the words, he gave Pinocchio a terrible blow on the head.

Pinocchio answered with another blow, and that was the signal for the beginning of the fray. In a few moments, the fight raged hot and heavy on both sides.

Pinocchio, although alone, defended himself bravely. With those two wooden feet of his, he worked so fast that his opponents kept at a respectful distance. Wherever they landed, they left their painful mark and the boys could only run away and howl.

Enraged at not being able to fight the Marionette at close quarters, they started to throw all kinds of books at him. Readers, geographies, histories, grammars flew in all directions. But Pinocchio was keen of eye and swift of movement, and the books only passed over his head, landed in the sea, and disappeared.

The fish, thinking they might be good to eat, came to the top of the water in great numbers. Some took a nibble, some took a bite, but no sooner had they tasted a page or two, than they spat them out with a wry face, as if to say:

"What a horrid taste! Our own food is so much better!"

Meanwhile, the battle waxed more and more furious. At the noise, a large Crab crawled slowly out of the water and, with a voice that sounded like a trombone suffering from a cold, he cried out:

"Stop fighting, you rascals! These battles between boys rarely end well. Trouble is sure to come to you!"

Poor Crab! He might as well have spoken to the wind. Instead of listening to his good advice, Pinocchio turned to him and said as roughly as he knew how:

"Keep quiet, ugly Gab! It would be better for you to chew a few cough drops to get rid of that cold you have. Go to bed and sleep! You will feel better in the morning."

In the meantime, the boys, having used all their books, looked around for new ammunition. Seeing Pinocchio's bundle lying idle near-by, they somehow managed to get hold of it.

One of the books was a very large volume, an arithmetic text, heavily bound in leather. It was Pinocchio's pride. Among all his books, he liked that one the best.

Thinking it would make a fine missile, one of the boys took hold of it and threw it with all his strength at Pinocchio's head. But instead of hitting the Marionette, the book struck one of the other boys, who, as pale as a ghost, cried out faintly: "Oh, Mother, help! I'm dying!" and fell senseless to the ground.

At the sight of that pale little corpse, the boys were so frightened that they turned tail and ran. In a few moments, all had disappeared.

All except Pinocchio. Although scared to death by the horror of what had been done, he ran to the sea and soaked his handkerchief in the cool water and with it bathed the head of his poor little schoolmate. Sobbing bitterly, he called to him, saying:

"Eugene! My poor Eugene! Open your eyes and look at me! Why don't you answer? I was not the one who hit you, you know. Believe me, I didn't do it. Open your eyes, Eugene? If you keep them shut, I'll die, too. Oh, dear me, how shall I ever go home now? How shall I ever look at my little mother again? What will happen to me? Where shall I go? Where shall I hide? Oh, how much better it would have been, a thousand times better, if only I had gone to school! Why did I listen to those boys? They always were a bad influence! And to think that the teacher had told me--and my mother, too!--'Beware of bad company!' That's what she said. But I'm stubborn and proud. I listen, but always I do as I wish. And then I pay. I've never had a moment's peace since I've been born! Oh, dear! What will become of me? What will become of me?"

Pinocchio went on crying and moaning and beating his head. Again and again he called to his little friend, when suddenly he heard heavy steps approaching.

He looked up and saw two tall Carabineers near him.

"What are you doing stretched out on the ground?" they asked Pinocchio.

"I'm helping this schoolfellow of mine."

"Has he fainted?"

"I should say so," said one of the Carabineers, bending to look at Eugene. "This boy has been wounded on the temple. Who has hurt him?"

"Not I," stammered the Marionette, who had hardly a breath left in his whole body.

"If it wasn't you, who was it, then?"

"Not I," repeated Pinocchio.

"And with what was he wounded?"

"With this book," and the Marionette picked up the arithmetic text to show it to the officer.

"And whose book is this?"

"Mine."

"Enough."

"Not another word! Get up as quickly as you can and come along with us."

"But I--"

"Come with us!"

"But I am innocent."

"Come with us!"

Before starting out, the officers called out to several fishermen passing by in a boat and said to them:

"Take care of this little fellow who has been hurt. Take him home and bind his wounds. Tomorrow we'll come after him."

They then took hold of Pinocchio and, putting him between them, said to him in a rough voice: "March! And go quickly, or it will be the worse for you!"

They did not have to repeat their words. The Marionette walked swiftly along the road to the village. But the poor fellow hardly knew what he was about. He thought he had a nightmare. He felt ill. His eyes saw everything double, his legs trembled, his tongue was dry, and, try as he might, he could not utter a single word. Yet, in spite of this numbness of feeling, he suffered keenly at the thought of passing under the windows of his good little Fairy's house. What would she say on seeing him between two Carabineers?

They had just reached the village, when a sudden gust of wind blew off Pinocchio's cap and made it go sailing far down the street.

"Would you allow me," the Marionette asked the Carabineers, "to run after my cap?"

"Very well, go; but hurry."

The Marionette went, picked up his cap--but instead of putting it on his

